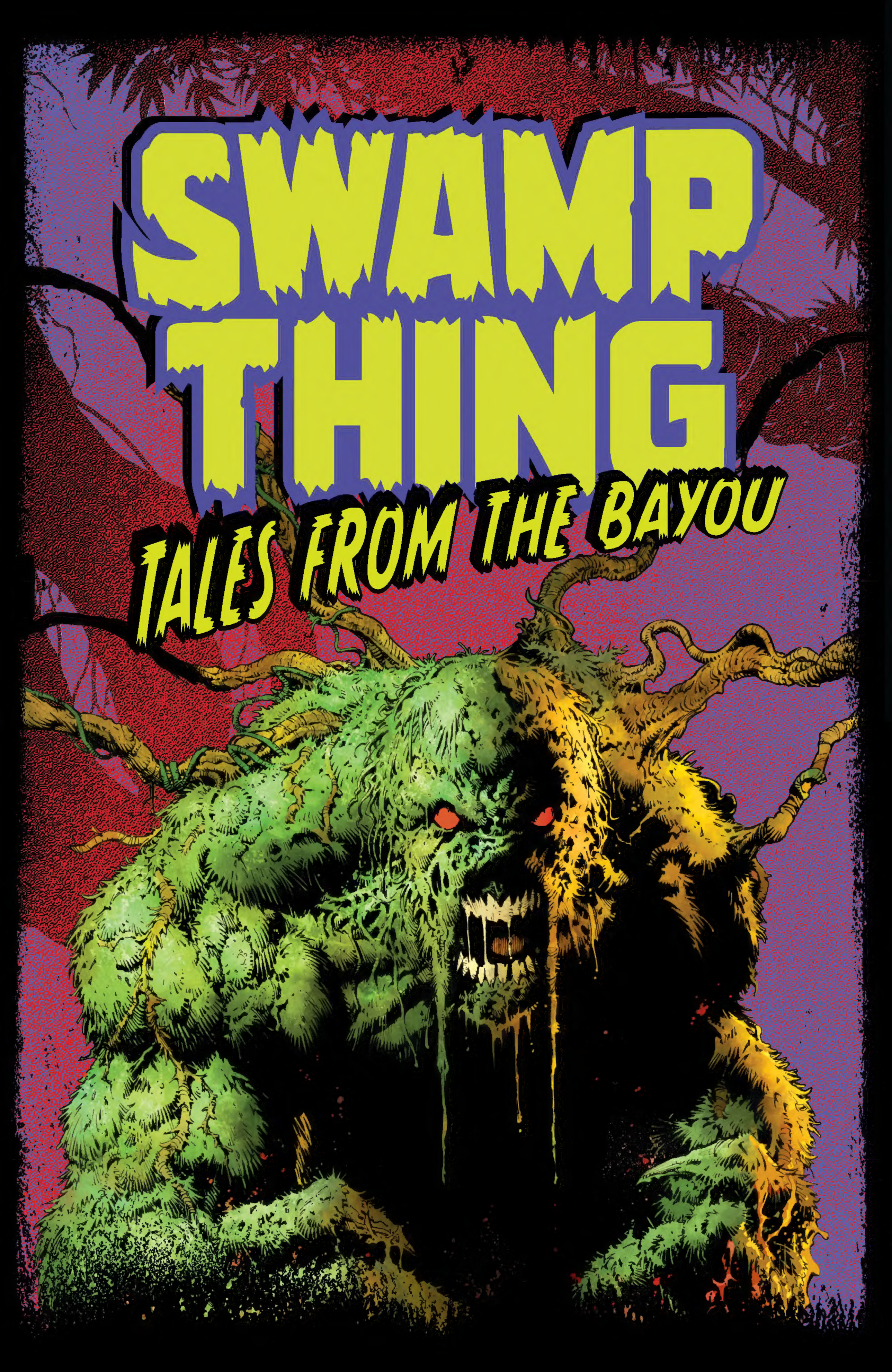
SWAMP THING™

TALES FROM THE BAYOU

TERRIFYING TALES STARRING DC'S MONSTROUS SUPERHERO!

DC


SWAMP
THING
TALES FROM THE BAYOU

SWAMP THING
TALES FROM THE BAYOU
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Swamp Thing: Tales from the Bayou

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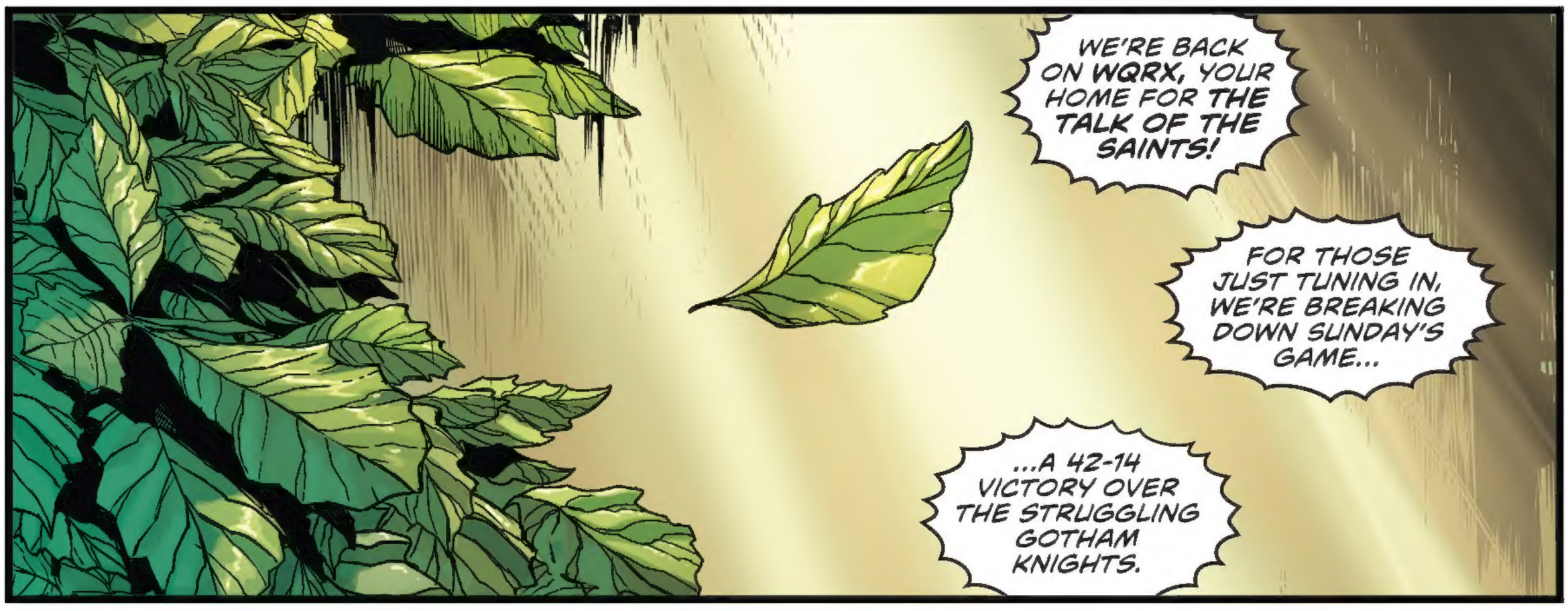
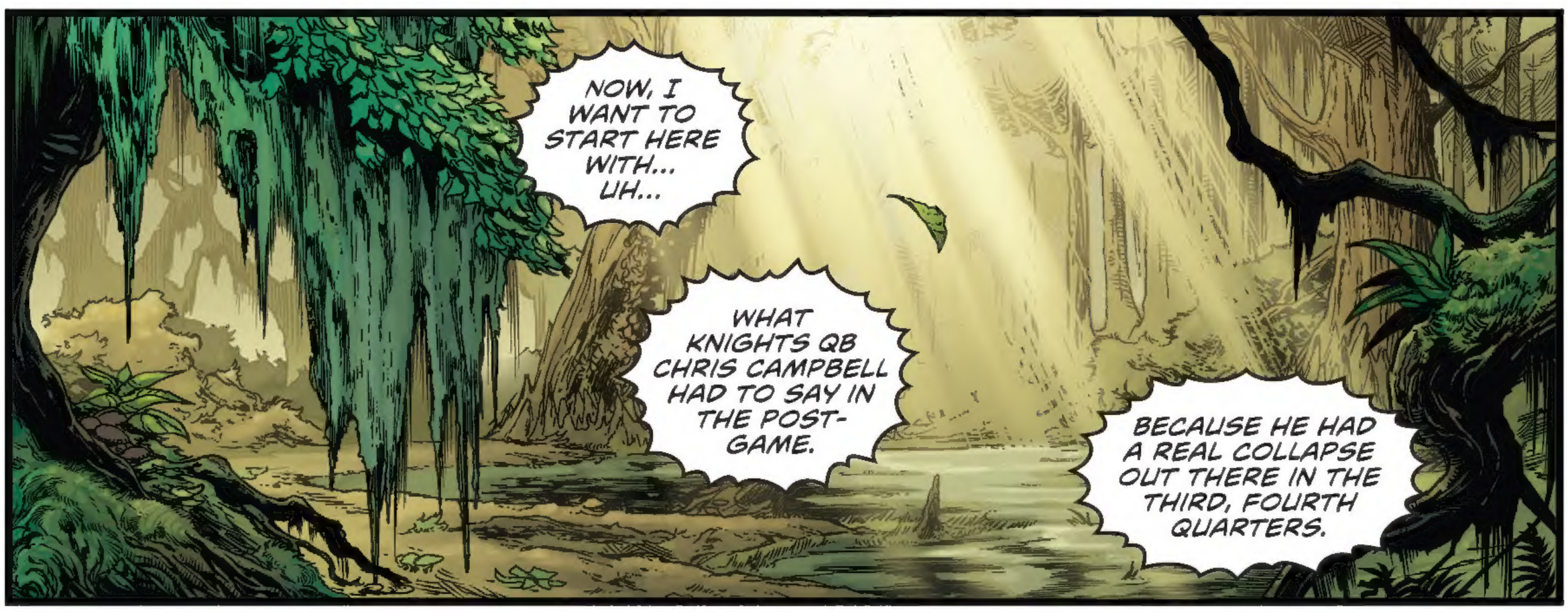
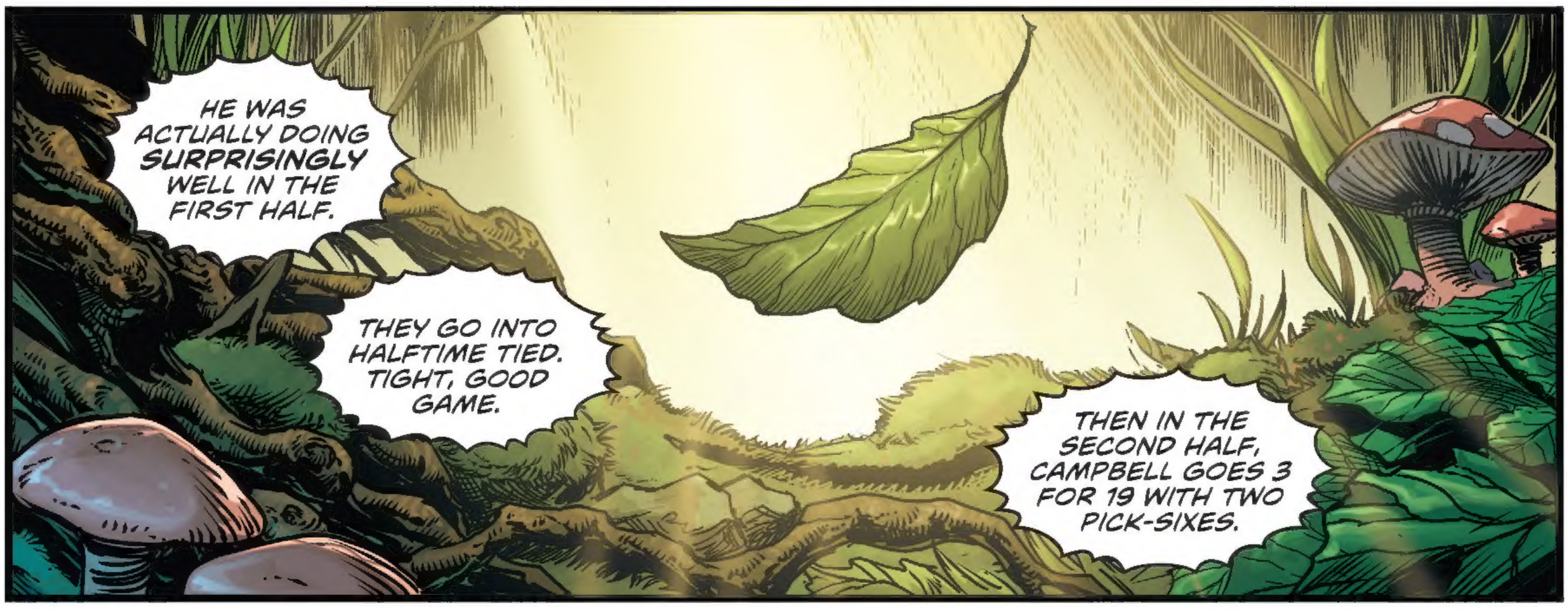
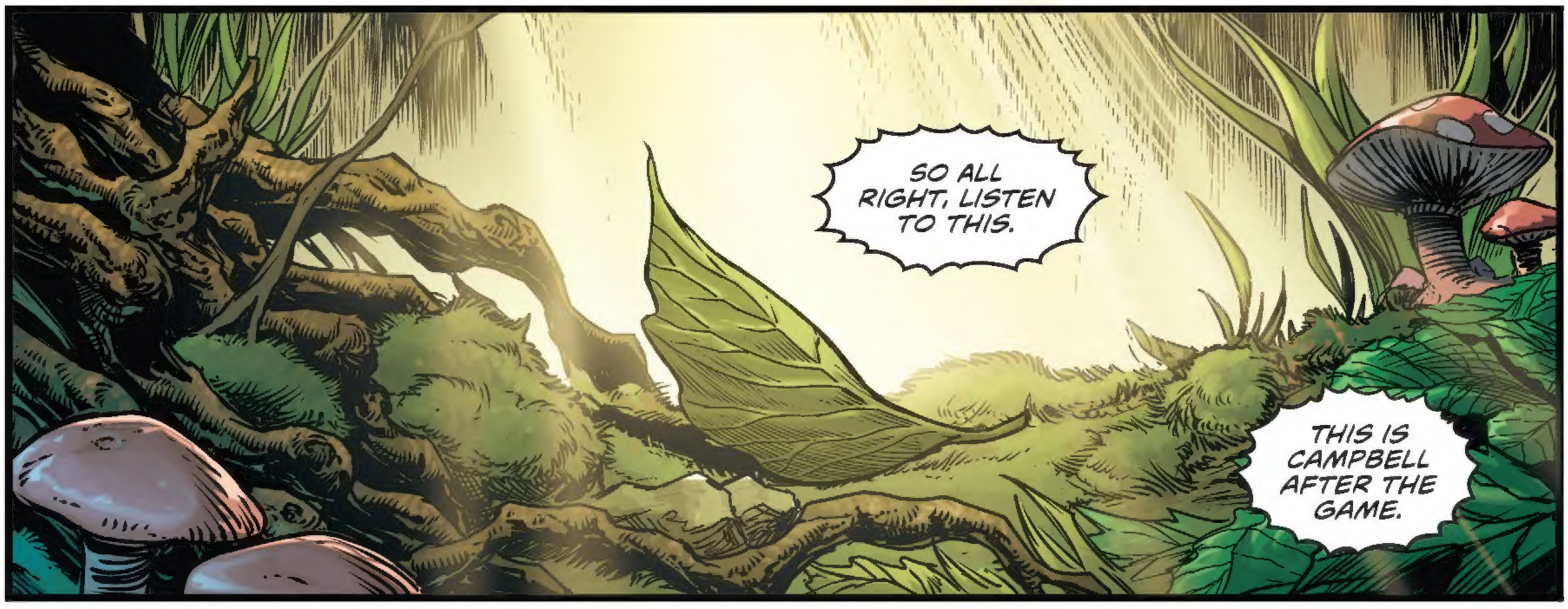
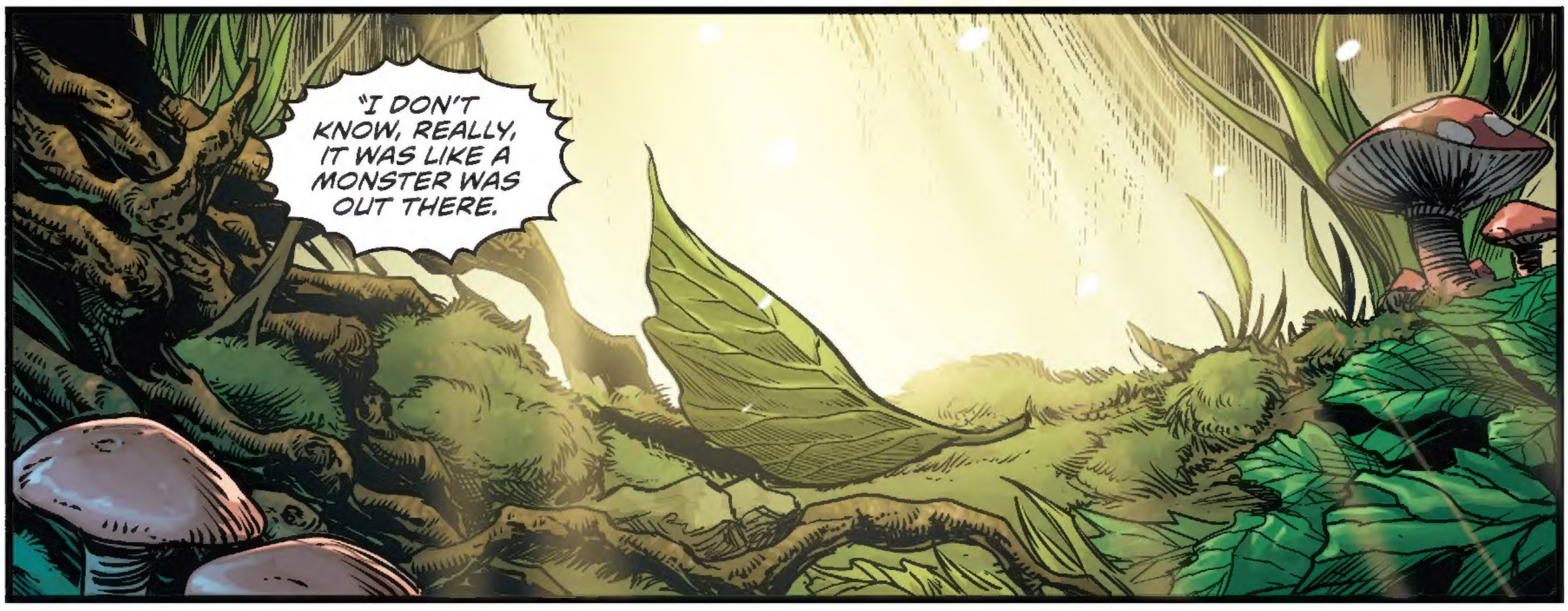
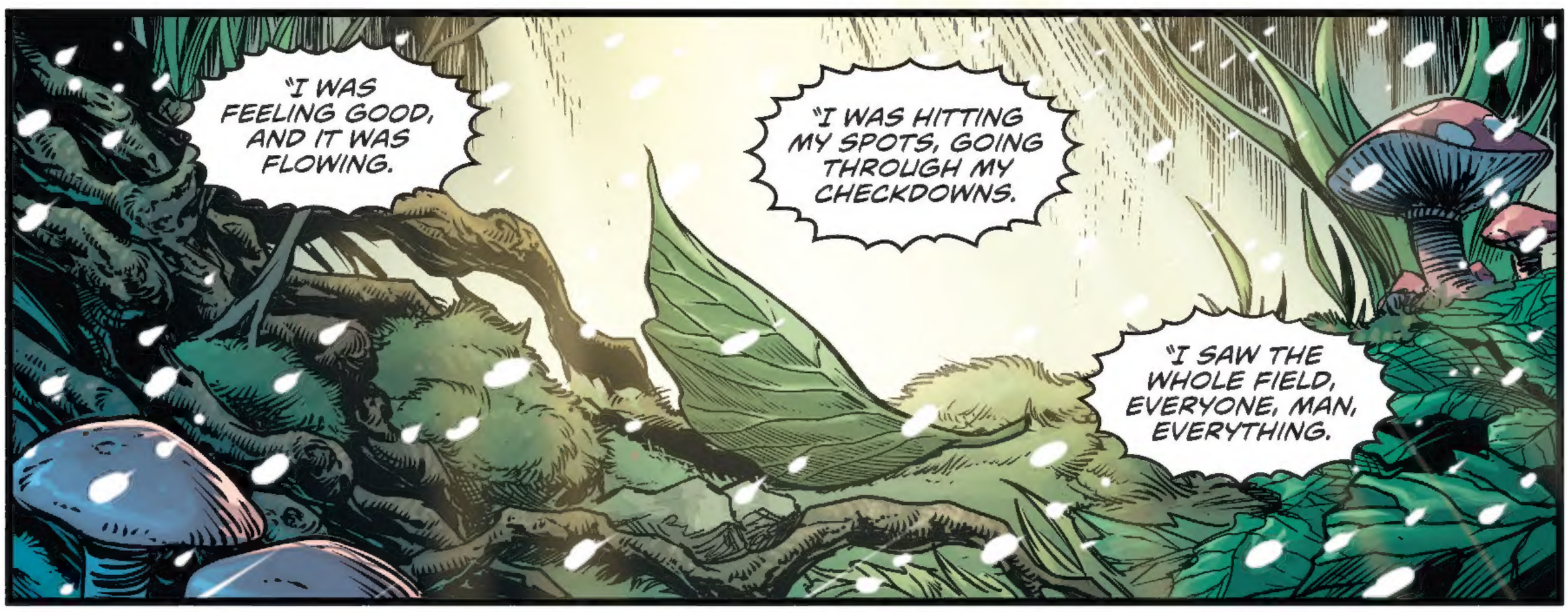

WE'RE BACK ON WQRX, YOUR HOME FOR THE TALK OF THE SAINTS!
FOR THOSE JUST TUNING IN, WE'RE BREAKING DOWN SUNDAY'S GAME...
...A 42-14 VICTORY OVER THE STRUGGLING GOTHAM KNIGHTS.

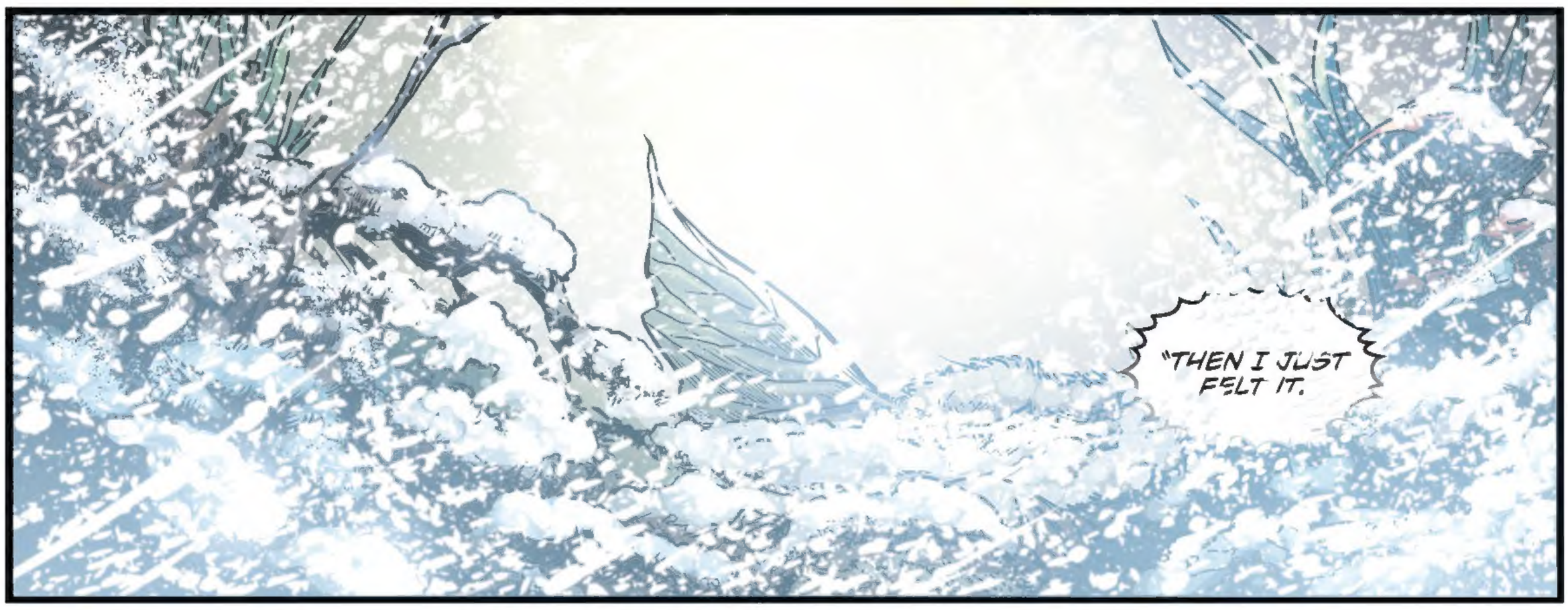

NOW, I WANT TO START HERE WITH... UH...
WHAT KNIGHTS QB CHRIS CAMPBELL HAD TO SAY IN THE POST-GAME.
BECAUSE HE HAD A REAL COLLAPSE OUT THERE IN THE THIRD, FOURTH QUARTERS.

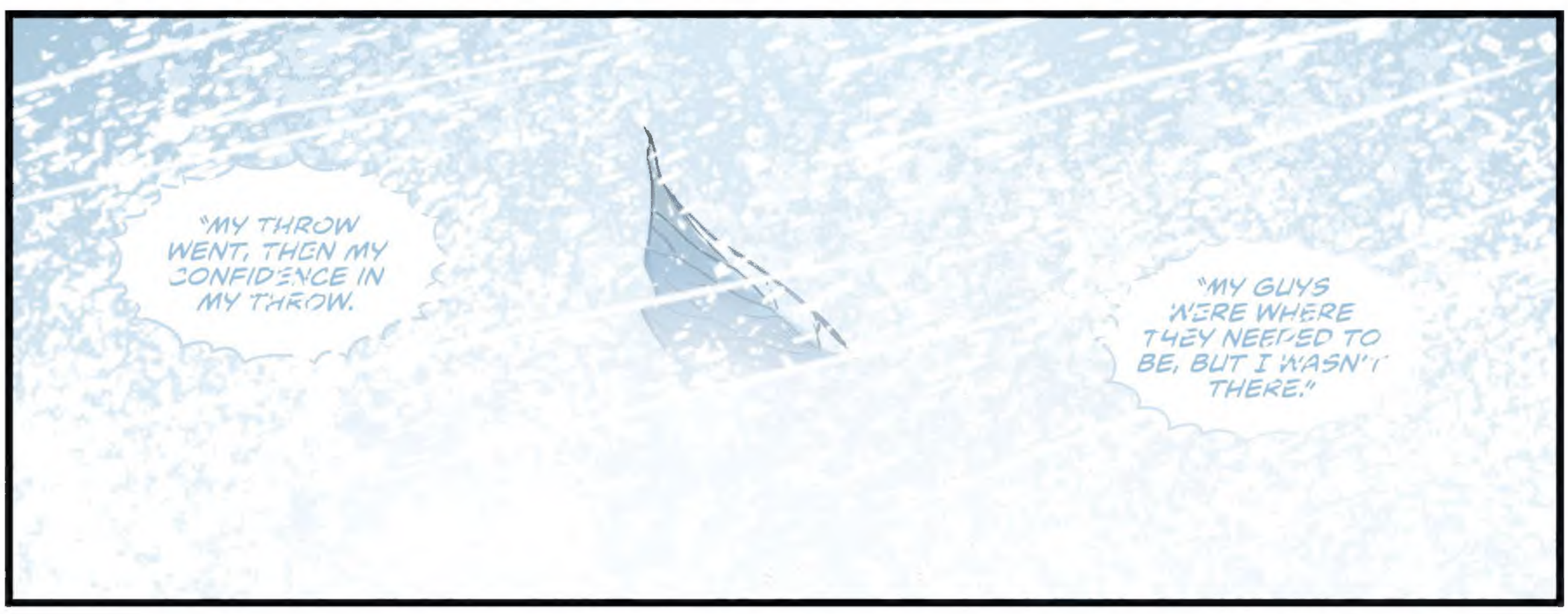

HE WAS ACTUALLY DOING SURPRISINGLY WELL IN THE FIRST HALF.
THEY GO INTO HALFTIME TIED. TIGHT, GOOD GAME.
THEN IN THE SECOND HALF, CAMPBELL GOES 3 FOR 19 WITH TWO PICK-SIXES.


SO ALL RIGHT, LISTEN TO THIS.
THIS IS CAMPBELL AFTER THE GAME.

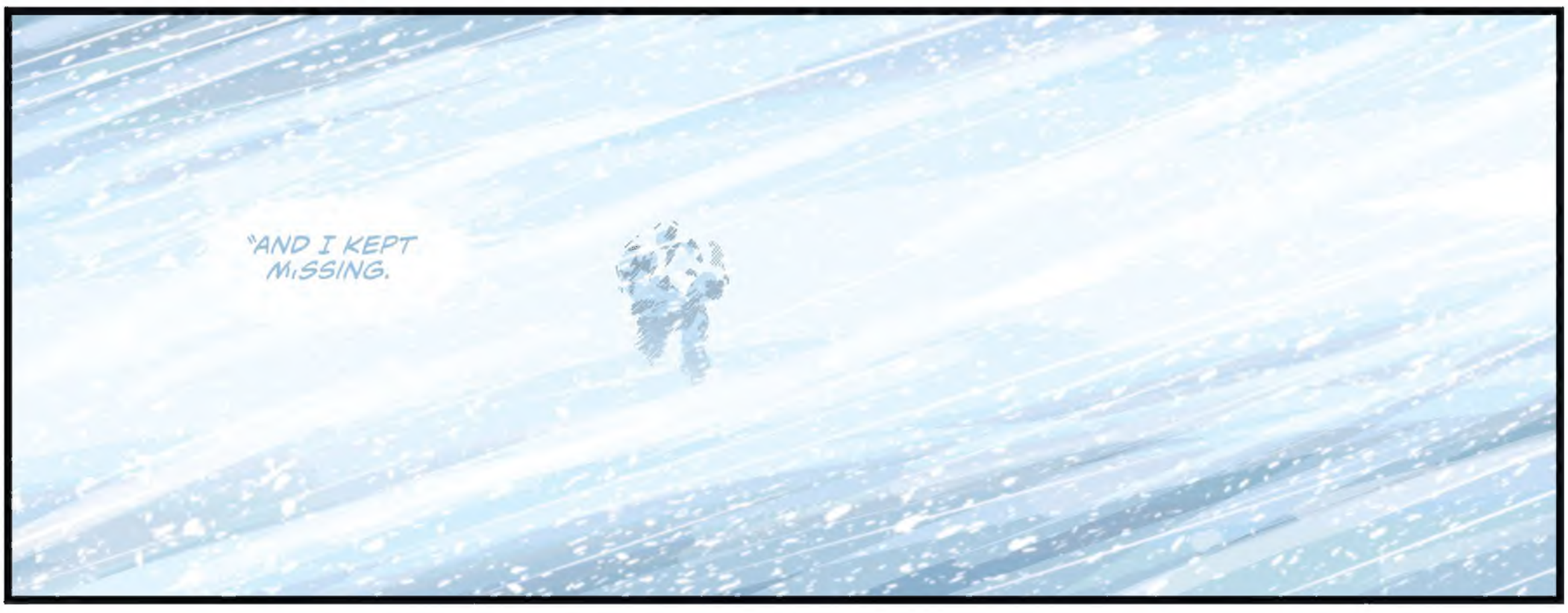

"I DON'T KNOW, REALLY, IT WAS LIKE A MONSTER WAS OUT THERE.


"I WAS FEELING GOOD, AND IT WAS FLOWING.
"I WAS HITTING MY SPOTS, GOING THROUGH MY CHECKDOWNS.
"I SAW THE WHOLE FIELD, EVERYONE, MAN, EVERYTHING.


"THEN I JUST FELT IT.


"MY THROW WENT, THEN MY CONFIDENCE IN MY THROW.
"MY GUYS WERE WHERE THEY NEEDED TO BE, BUT I WASN'T THERE."

"I TOLD THE MEDICAL STAFF GUYS. MAYBE A CONCUSSION OR SOMETHING.
"BUT I GUESS I CHECKED OUT, SO I KEPT PLAYING.


"AND I KEPT MISSING.

"I WAS ON THE GROUND LOOKING UP, AND I KNEW.

"IT WAS A MONSTER.
"THE MONSTER GOT ME."

THE TALK OF THE SAINTS

Written by TOM KING
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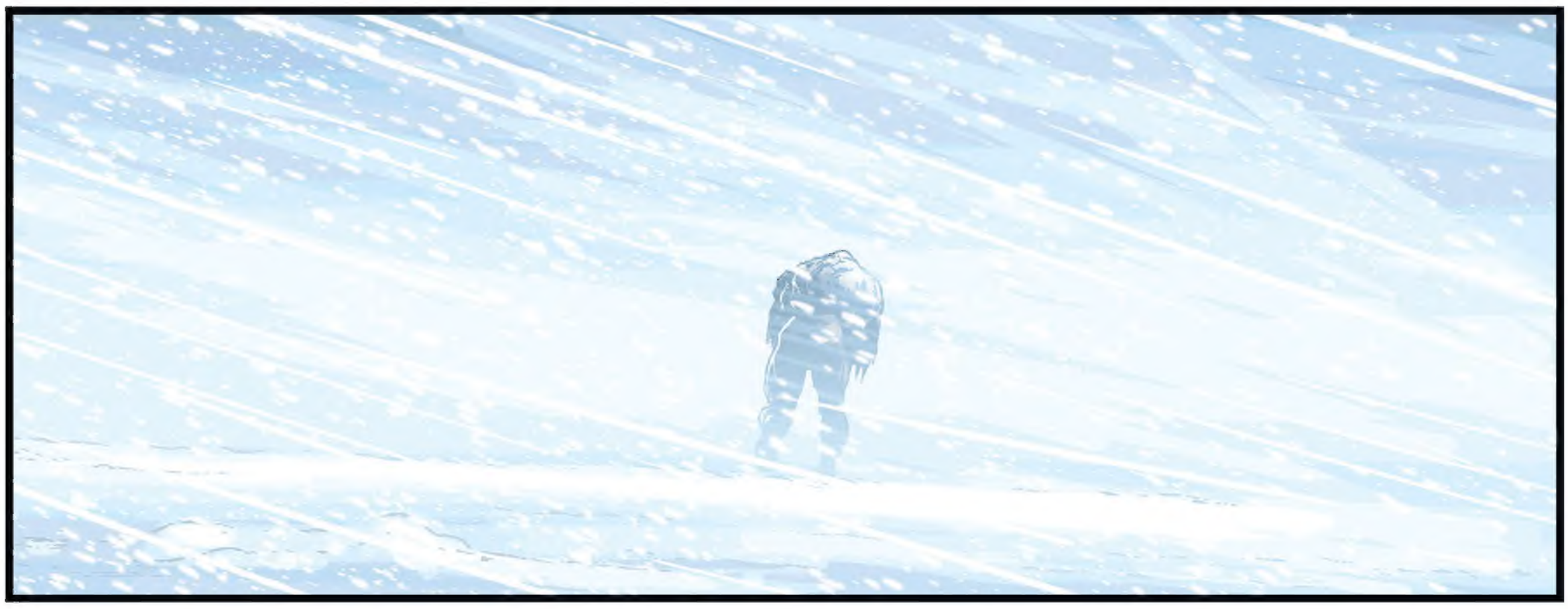
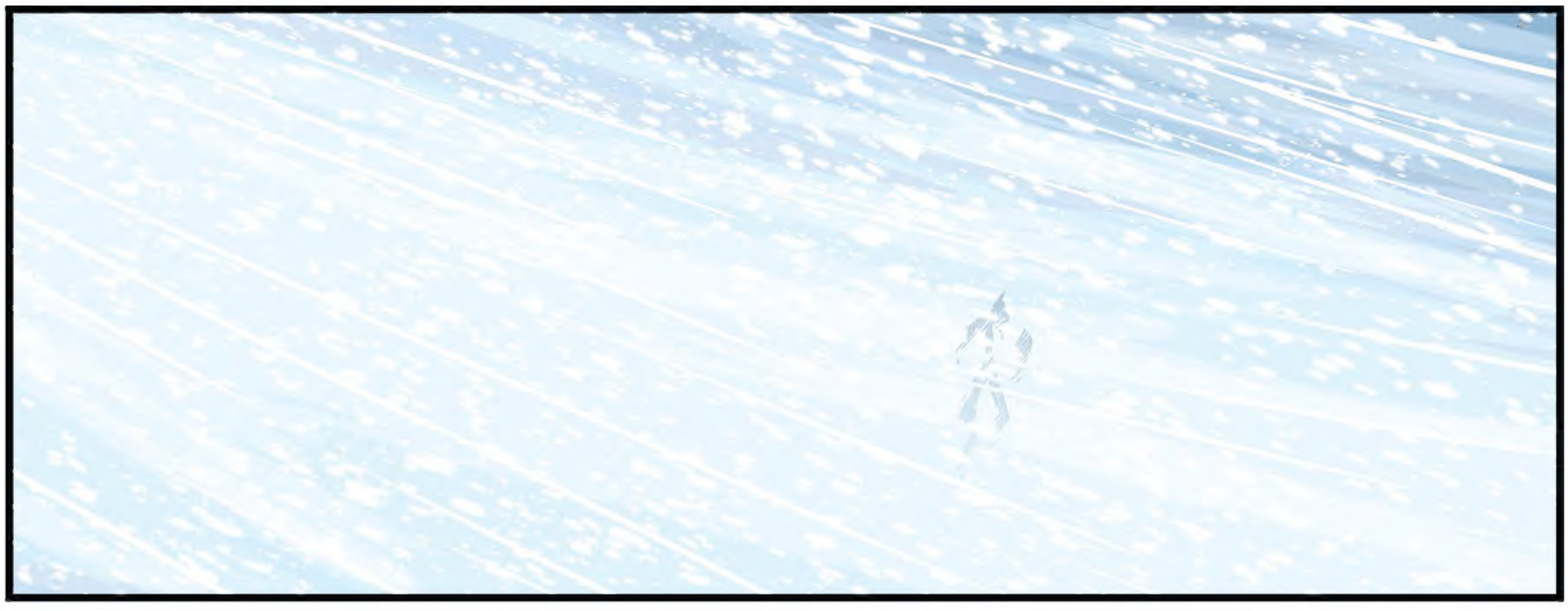
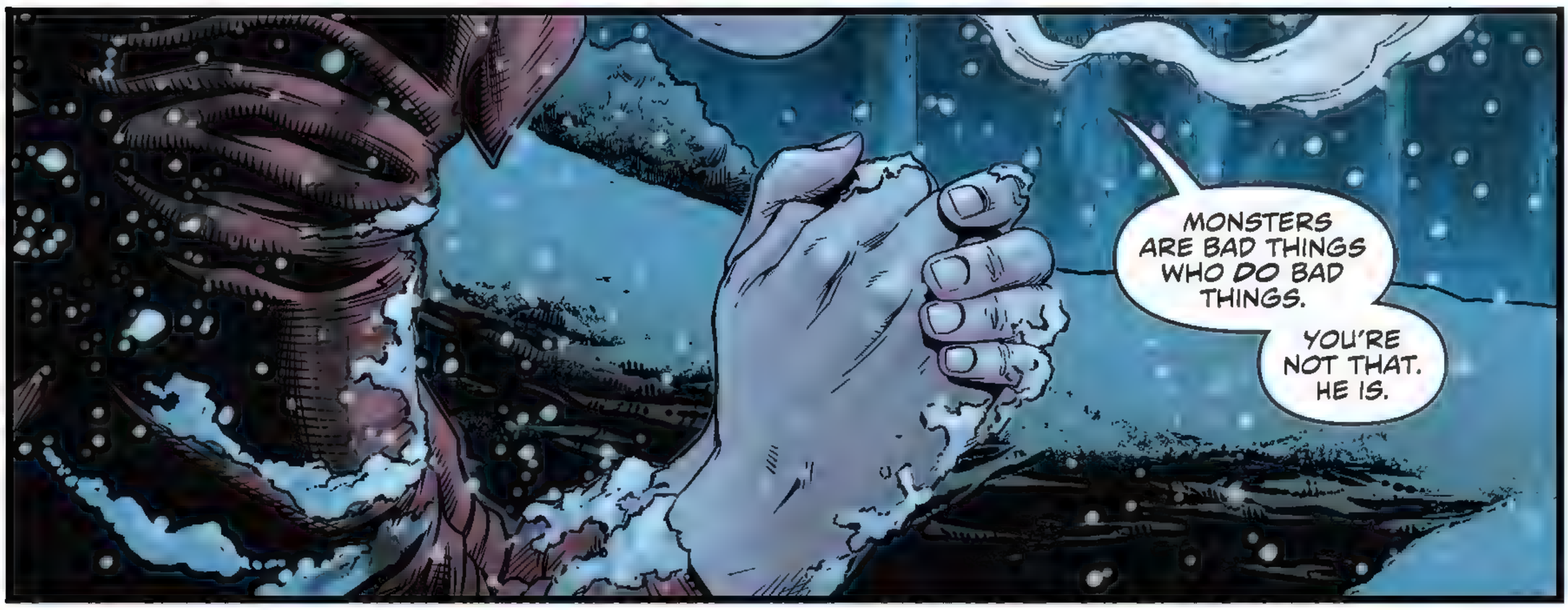
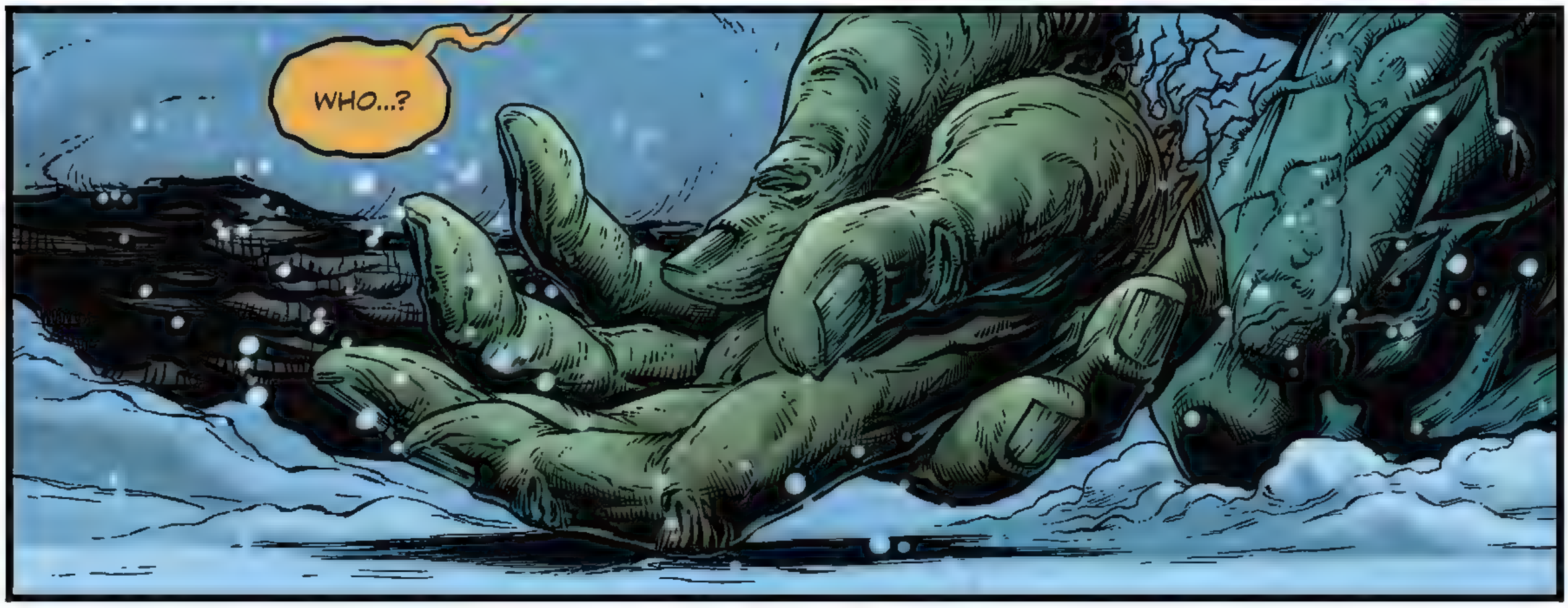




Later.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE A MONSTER.

I'M... NOT?


MONSTERS ARE BAD THINGS WHO DO BAD THINGS.
YOU'RE NOT THAT. HE IS.

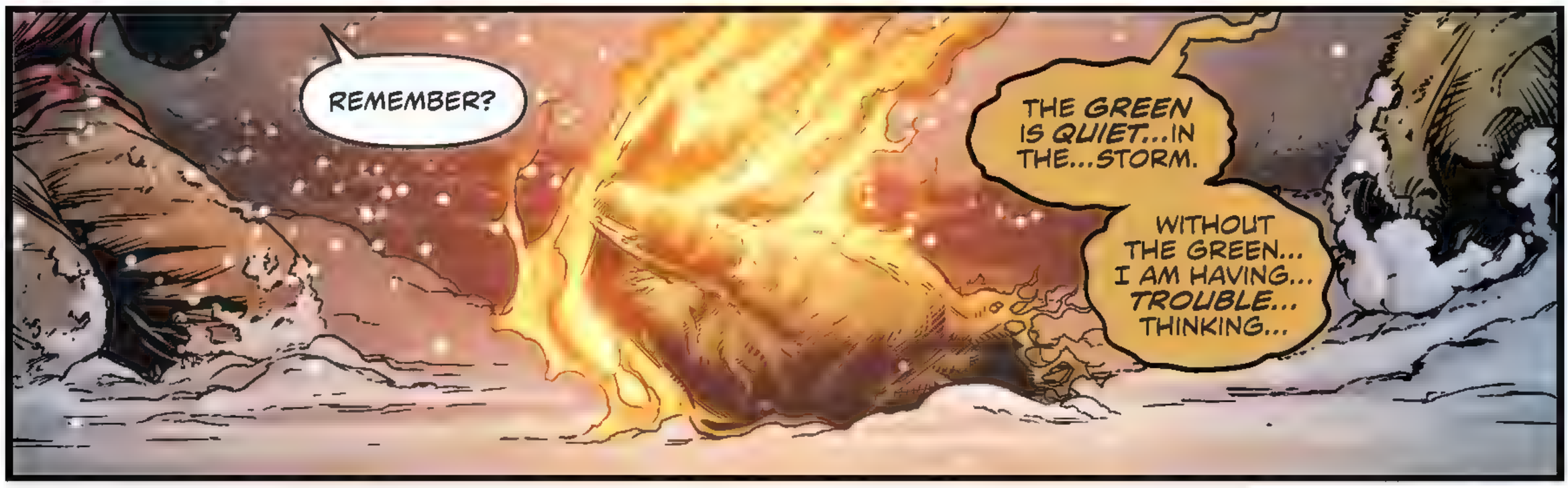

WHO...?

THE SNOW MONSTER.

I DON'T... UNDERSTAND...

REMEMBER. YOU SAID HE DID THIS.

YOU SAID, YOU HAD TO KILL HIM TO MAKE FLOWERS AND STUFF COME BACK.
BUT YOU WERE TOO, LIKE, WEAK, BECAUSE OF THE COLD, YOU SAID.

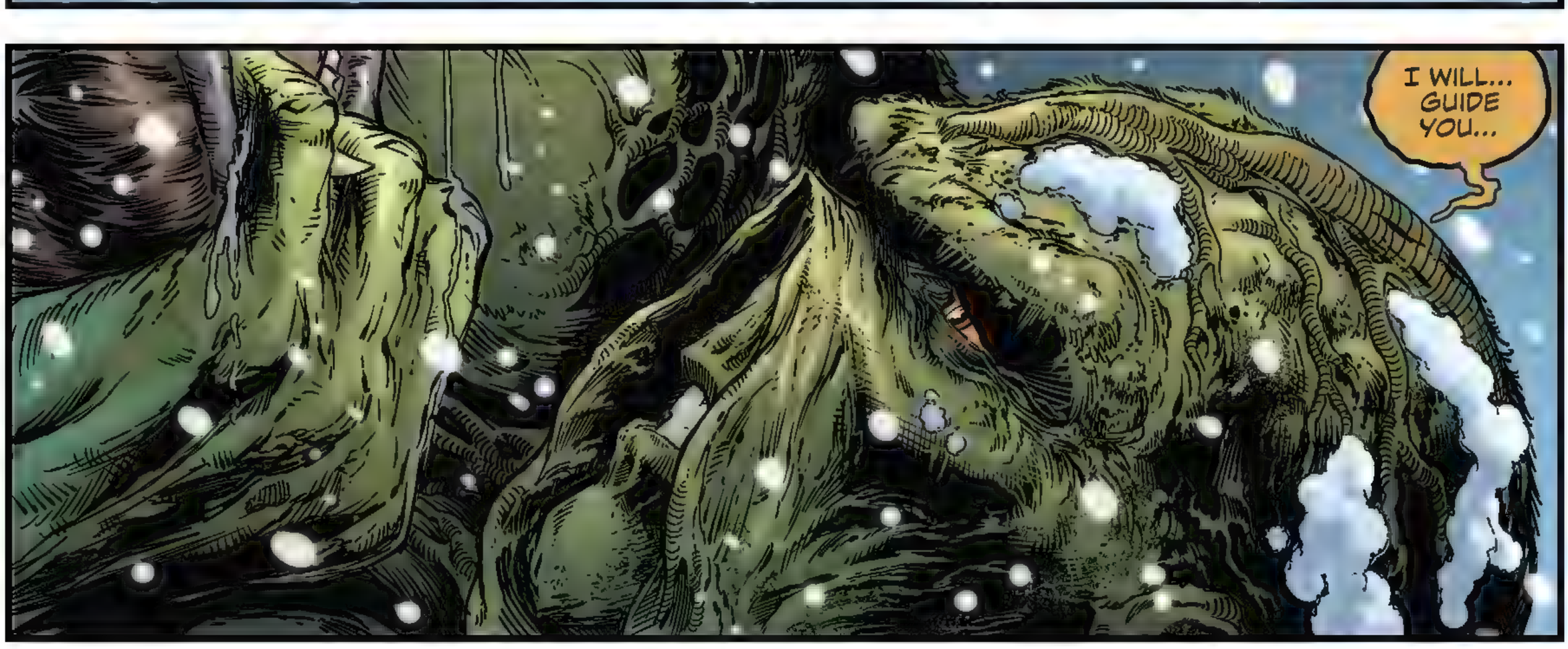

REMEMBER?
THE GREEN IS QUIET...IN THE...STORM.
WITHOUT THE GREEN... I AM HAVING... TROUBLE... THINKING...

I...DO NOT...
...REMEMBER.

Later.
ME AND MY SISTER AND MY MOM AND MY DAD WERE IN THE SWAMP.
MY DAD WANTED TO SHOW US SOMETHING. LIKE A FROG THING.
IT WAS SO HOT. I WAS SWEATING AND WET LIKE I WAS IN A POOL OR SOMETHING.
AND I SAW YOU! AND NO ONE ELSE DID.
AND I WAS SCARED, AND I RAN AWAY.
AND MY DAD WAS YELLING AT ME AND EVERYTHING.
AND THEN IT WAS SO COLD!
AND THEN THE SNOW MONSTER CAME OUT!
AND I COULDN'T HEAR MY DAD OR ANYTHING. IT WAS SO COLD.
AND THEN YOU WERE FIGHTING THE SNOW MONSTER.
AND HE WAS TRYING TO KILL BOTH OF US. AND HE WAS WINNING!
BUT YOU PUNCHED HIM! AND YOU TOOK ME, AND WE RAN!
AND THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME WE FOUGHT HIM.

Later.
GRRRRGGGGH
RUN...
BUT...DO NOT RUN... FAR.
GGRRGGGGH
I WILL SPEAK... WITH...THE BEAR...

I AM... SORRY.
GGGRGGH
I DO NOT... HAVE ANOTHER WAY...TO RETURN YOU TO WHERE YOU...BELONG.
SO YOU MUST TRAVEL...THE LONGER PATH...
GRRGGGH
WHEN THE SNOW MELTS...YOU WILL COME...TO THE GREEN...
I WILL...FIND YOU...

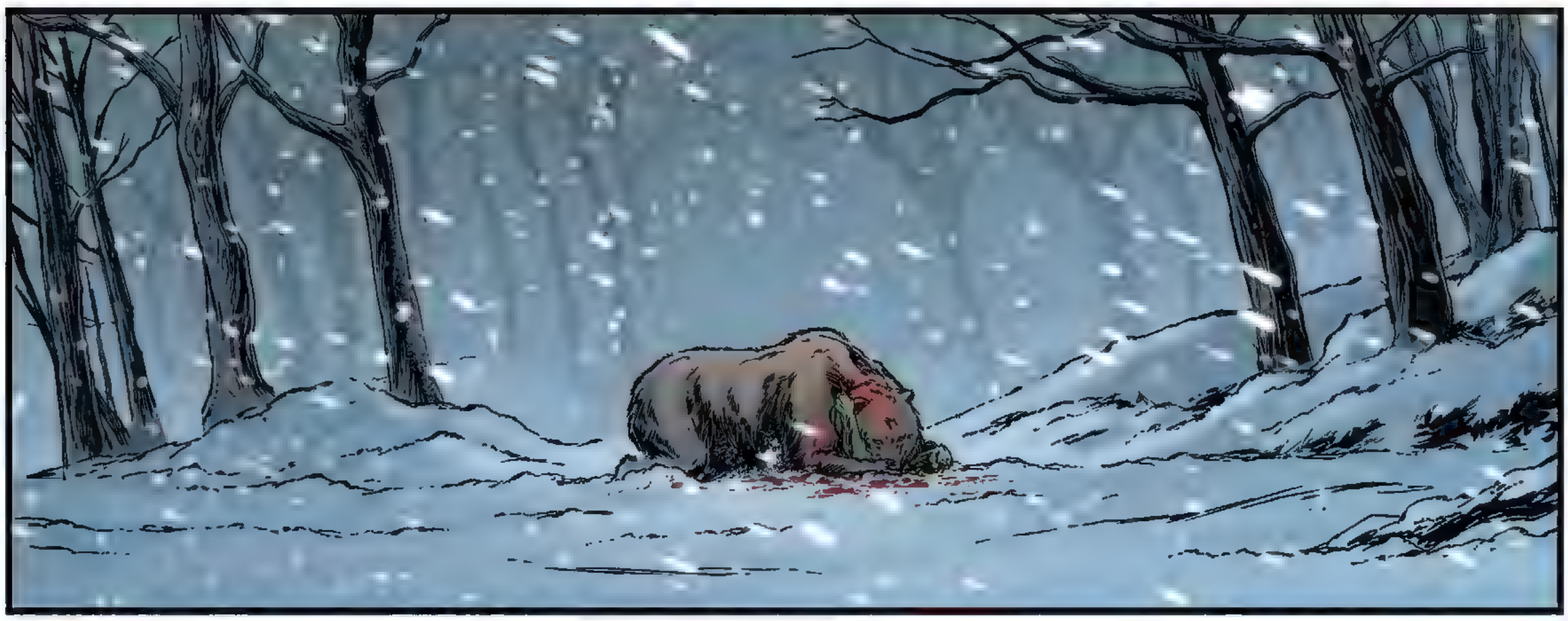

I WILL... GUIDE YOU...

SKI
...HOME.

AAGGGH

ACGGKHHH

OONNN

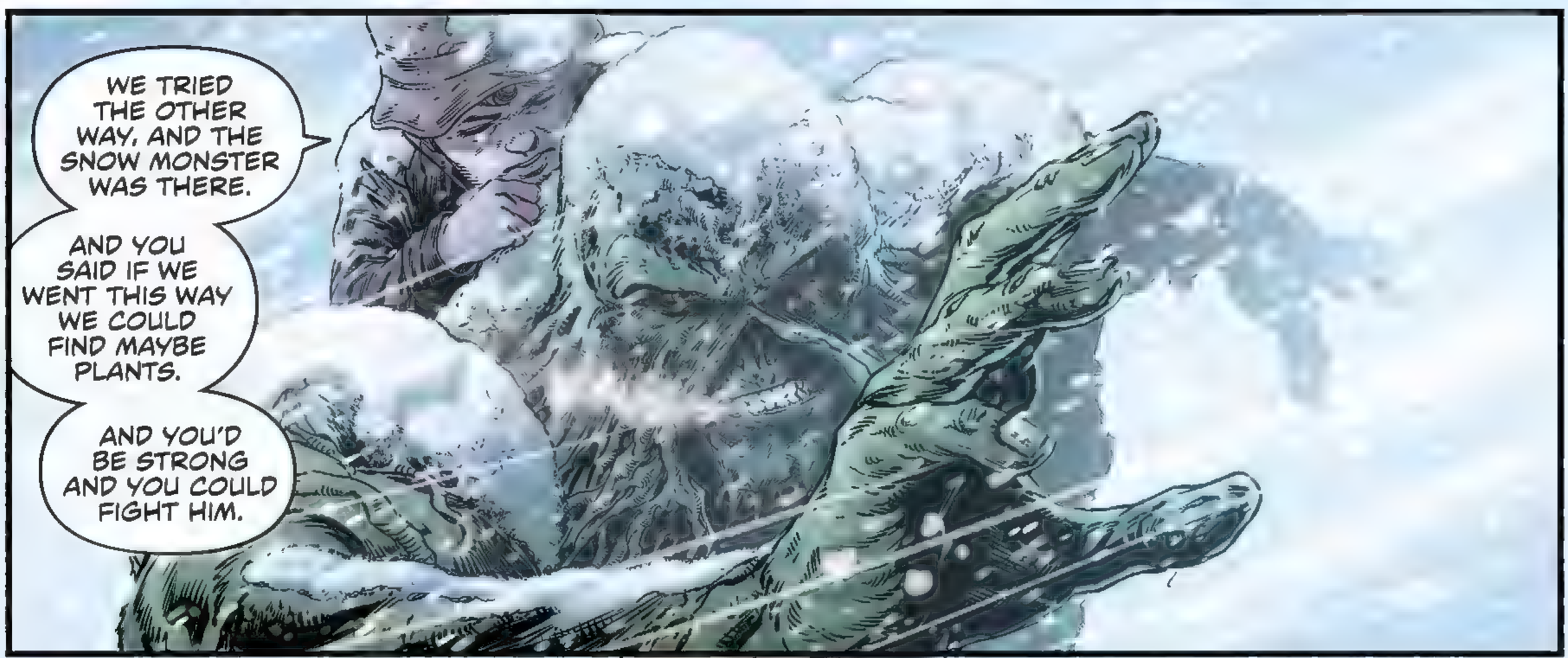


YOU ARE... UNINJURED?
YOU S-S-SAVED ME?
LEAN CLOSE TO ME...
THE BLOOD...IS... WARM.
YOU SAVED ME...
SEE.
YOU'RE NOT A MONSTER.

Later.
WHY DO WE... TRAVEL THIS... DIRECTION?

DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
YOU SAID WE HAD TO.

NO...I CAN'T... REMEMBER.

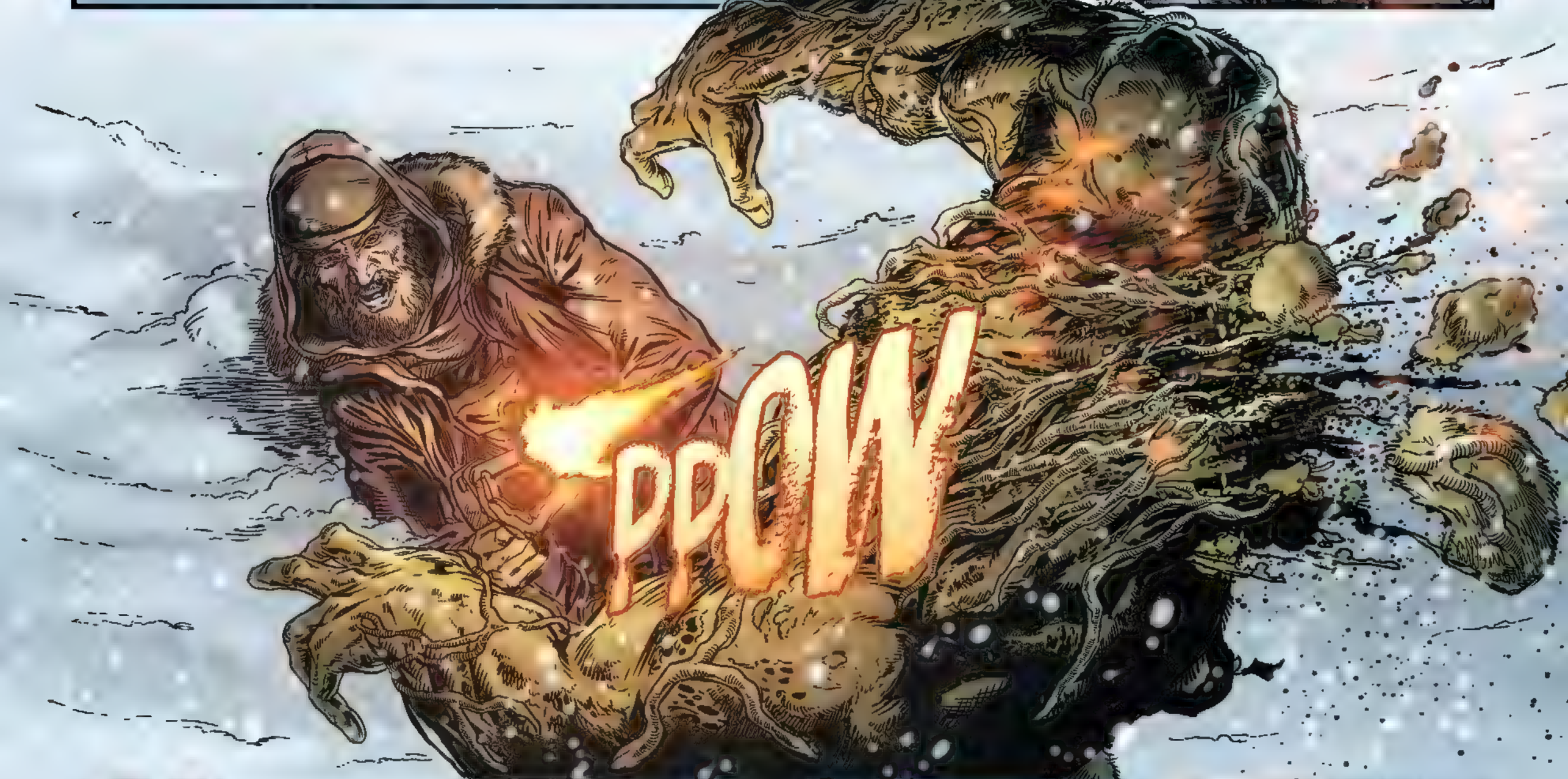

WE TRIED THE OTHER WAY, AND THE SNOW MONSTER WAS THERE.
AND YOU SAID IF WE WENT THIS WAY WE COULD FIND MAYBE PLANTS.
AND YOU'D BE STRONG AND YOU COULD FIGHT HIM.

YOU'D BE A SUPERHERO AGAIN.

Later.
ARE THEY DEAD? ALL OF THEM?
THERE'S SO MANY.
ZNNNNGZ
PLEASE...
I AM... HERE.

REST... FRIEND...
WE WILL...HELP YOU.
W-WAIT...
H-HAVE TO...T-TELL... YOU...

YES... WHAT IS...IT?


SPLAT

D-DON'T KNOW HOW YOU G-G-GOT...
...ALL THAT M-MUCH MEAT LEFT ON YOU, CHILD.

BUT I...I H-HAVE...
...THAT IS, I AIM TO T-T-TAKE IT.
NO...

NOW, YOU UN-UNDERSTAND, I AIN'T S-S-SAYING I AIN'T SORRY.
BUT I D-DONE WHAT I...DONE ALREADY.
AND I GOT TO D-D-DO SOME MORE.

IT'S J-JUST TH-THIS SNOW.
IT'S D-DOING THIS.
N-NOT ME.

IT D-D-DOES SOMETHING TO Y-YOU.
T-TURNS YOU INTO WHO YOU...
IT MAKES YOU SO...

...HUNGRY.
SIR...

I AM SORRY...
I...DO NOT HAVE A WAY...TO RETURN YOU... HOME...SIR.
SO YOU MUST TAKE...THE LONGER PATH.
WHAT...
NO...

Later.
YESTERDAY YOU ALMOST HAD HIM!

Later.
HE'S RIGHT BEHIND US!

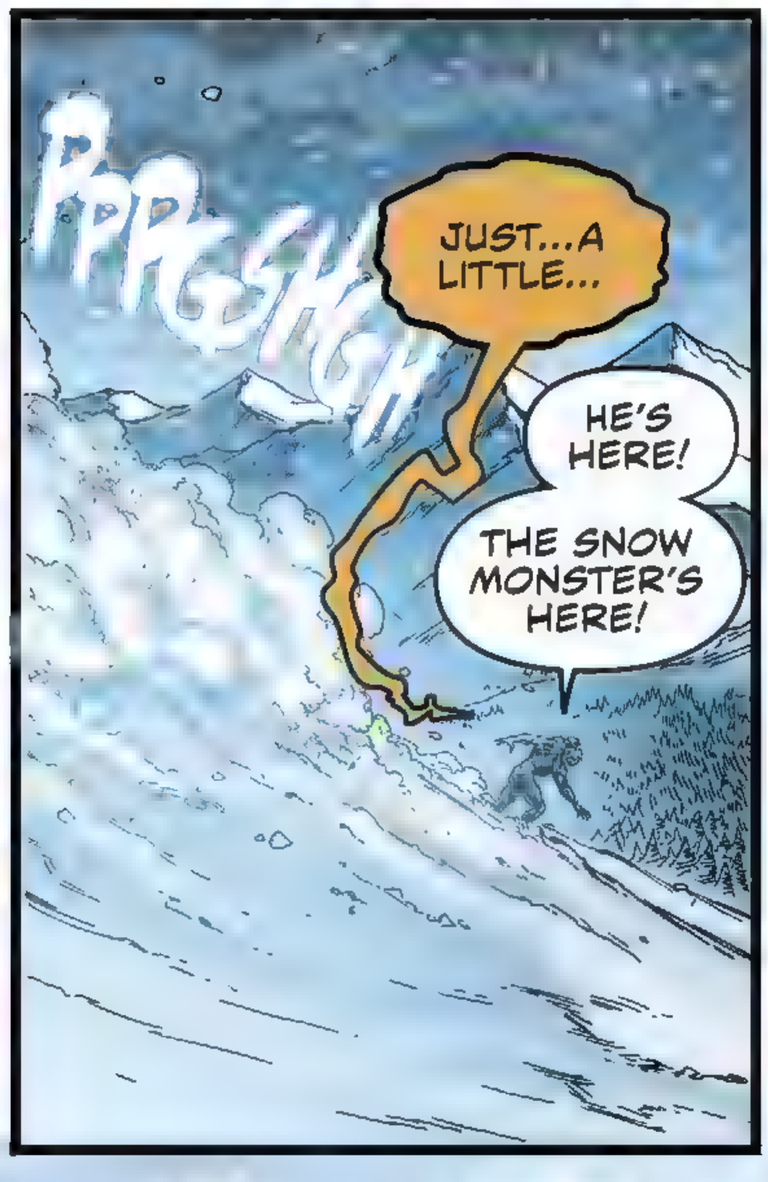
Later.
SOMETIMES HE COMES... AT NIGHT...
WE SHOULDN'T... MMM...
SLEEP.

Later.
THIS MORNING I THOUGHT HE WAS GOING TO KILL YOU.

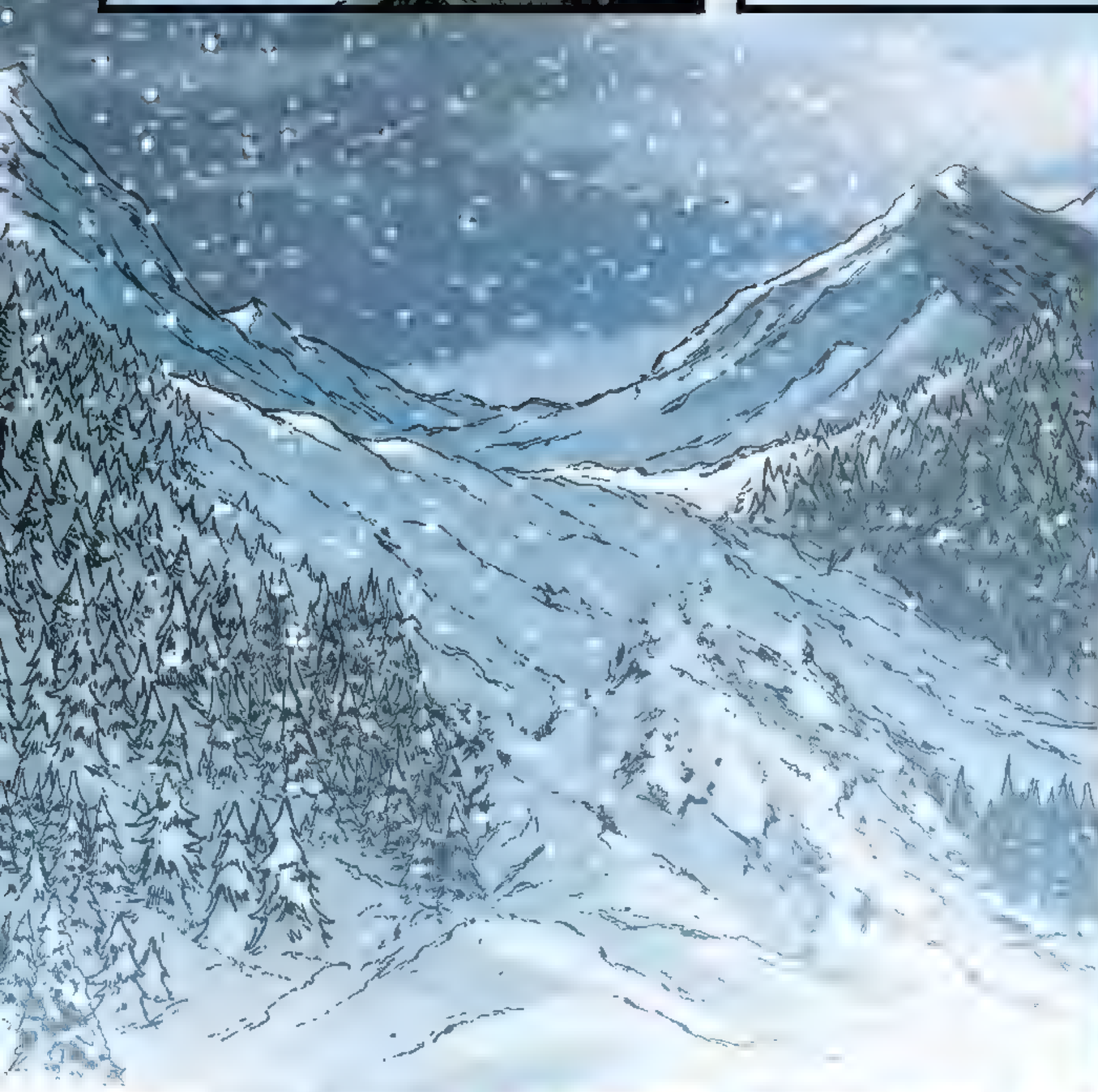
Later.
I WISH YOU COULD REMEMBER.
YOU WERE SO BRAVE.

Later.
I HATE THE SNOW MONSTER.
I WISH HE WOULD GO AWAY.

Later.
PGHHHHSHH
WE MUST...
AAAAAA!!

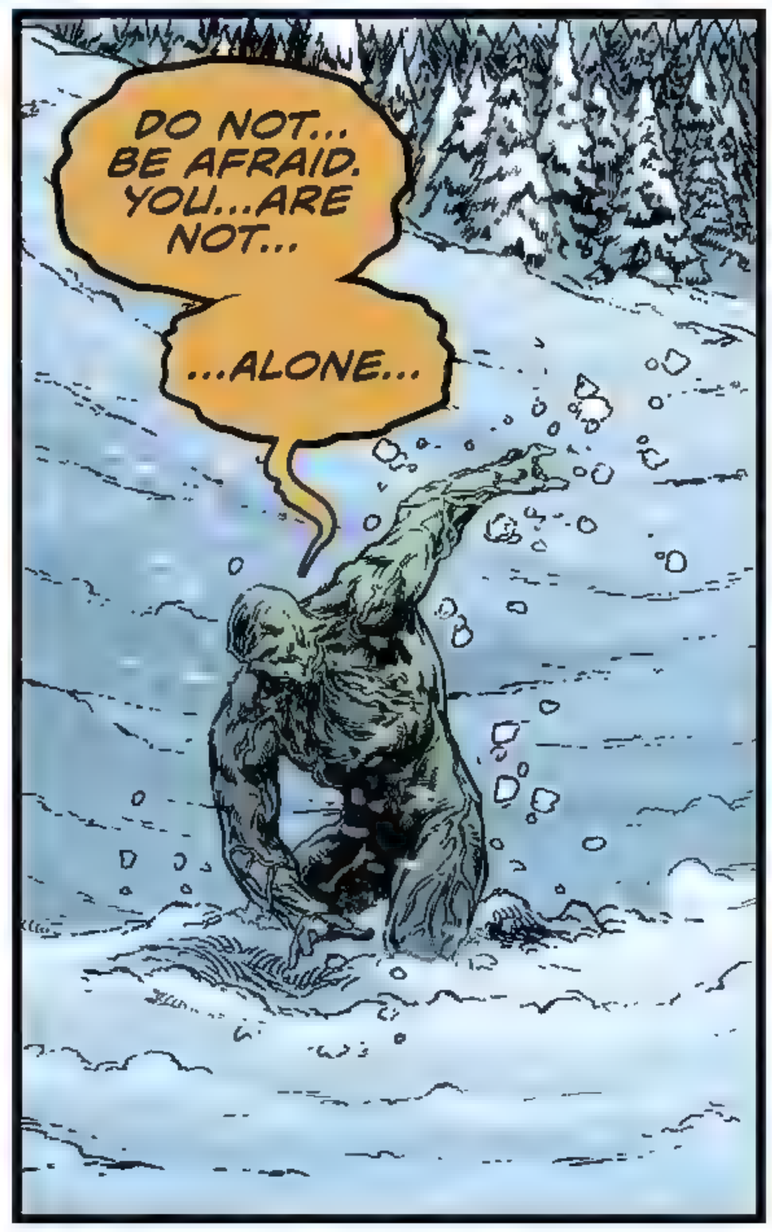

PPPGSHGH
JUST...A LITTLE...
HE'S HERE!
THE SNOW MONSTER'S HERE!

AAAAAA!
NO...
PSHHHHHH

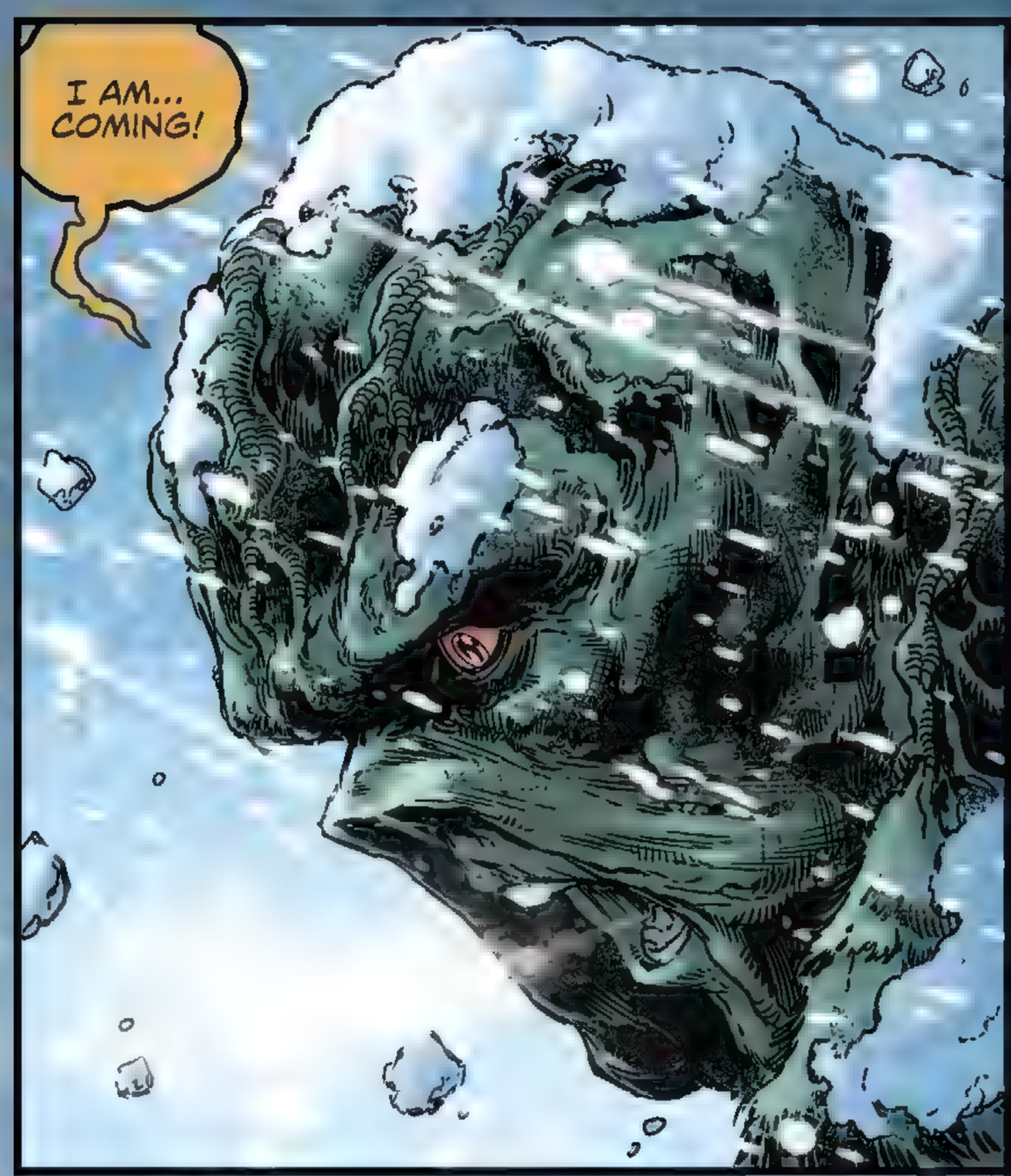


NO!

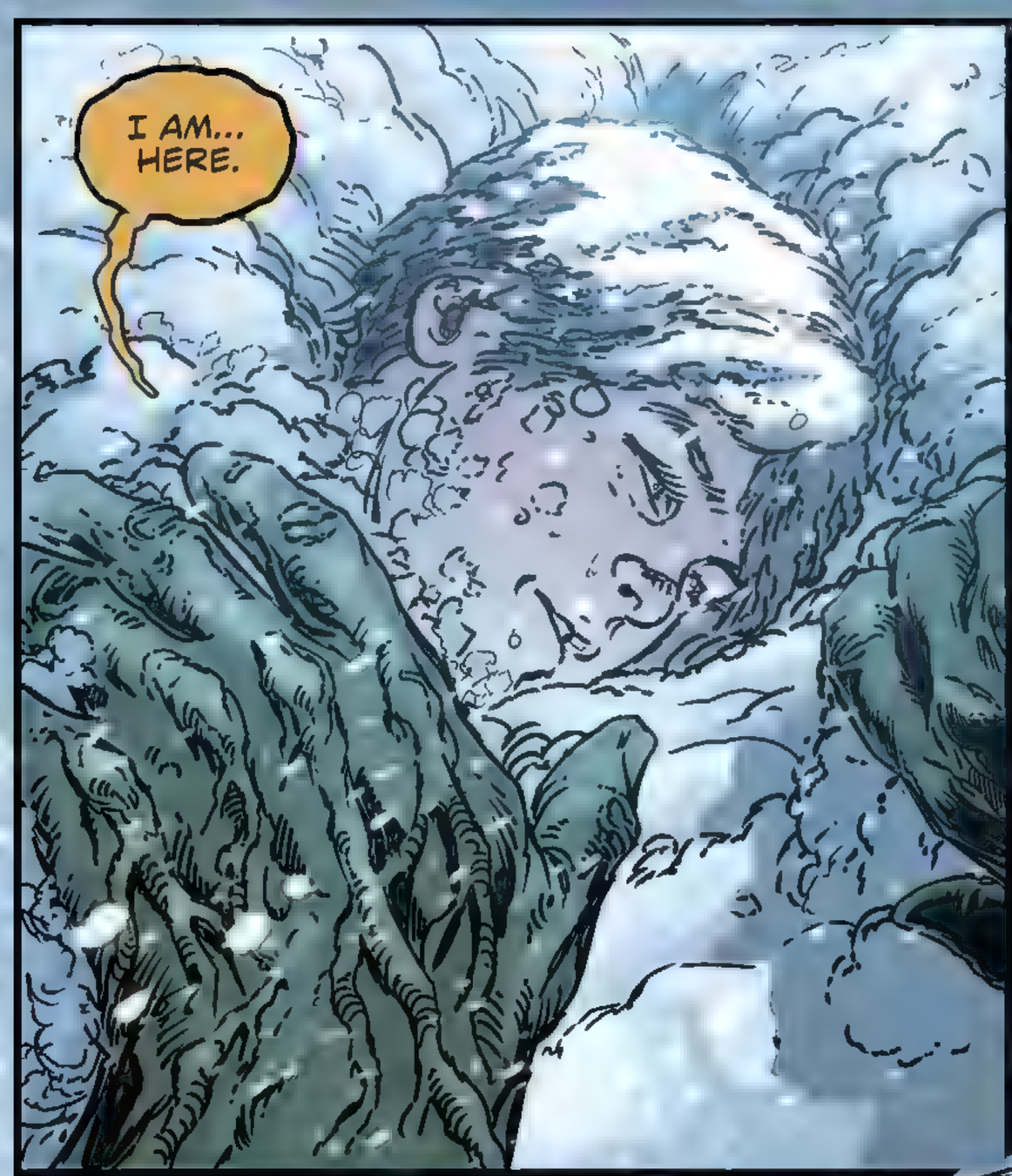
BOY?!


DO NOT... BE AFRAID. YOU...ARE NOT...
...ALONE...

I AM...
...HERE...
I WILL... FIND YOU!!


I AM... COMING!

PLEASE... PLEASE...


I AM... HERE.

IT IS...
...ALL RIGHT...

YOU ARE...
...SAFE...

Later.
THE ROT NEEDS TO... COME OFF...
I NEED... TO...REMOVE IT...

NO...NO.
NO, NO, NO, NO, NO!

YOU WILL... DIE...
NO!

YOU ARE A MONSTER!
YOU DON'T WANT TO SAVE ME, YOU WANT TO CUT ME!
YOU'RE CUTTING ME BECAUSE YOU'RE A MONSTER!

NO... PLEASE...
I...AM CUTTING YOU...
...BECAUSE I AM...SAVING YOU...

MONSTER!!

Later.
YOU FOUGHT HIM YESTERDAY.
YESTERDAY...
HE ALMOST KILLED YOU.
WE ROLLED DOWN A HILL.
HE WAS SO CLOSE TO US.
WE'LL NEVER BEAT HIM, I KNOW.
THE SWAMP WILL NEVER COME BACK.
NO...YOU SHOULD...NOT THINK...THIS.
THE GREEN WILL... RETURN...
...I PROMISE.
EVERYTHING WILL...NOT ALWAYS BE...
SNOW.

Later.
THERE!

MY EYES... ARE NOT... GOOD NOW.
I CANNOT... SEE...THROUGH THE...STORM.

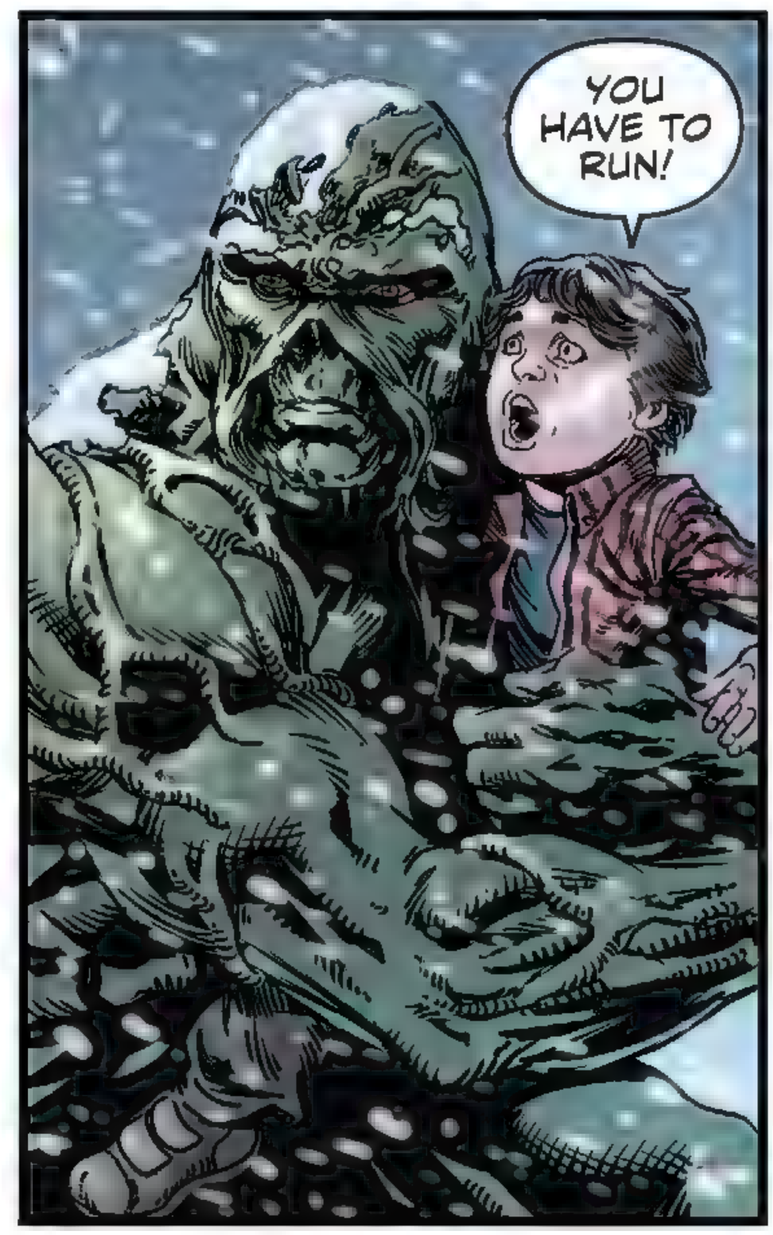
IT'S THE SNOW MONSTER!

RUN!

≡UNNNGG≡

HE'S COMING!

YOU HAVE TO GET UP!


YOU HAVE TO RUN!

RUN!

Later.
AFTER THE... ACCIDENT... EVERYONE THOUGHT I WAS...
...A HORROR...

Later.
THEY ALL...SAW ME...
...AND... SCREAMED...

Later.
I WOULD... TRY TO...SHOW THEM...
...WHAT I AM...IS NOT...WHAT I AM...

Later.
I CAN... STILL DO...
THAT IS...I CAN STILL... BE...
...GOOD...

Later.
THEY HEARD...BUT DID NOT... HEAR.
THEY CALLED ME...SWAMP THING...

Later.
THEY... KEPT...
...SCREAMING...

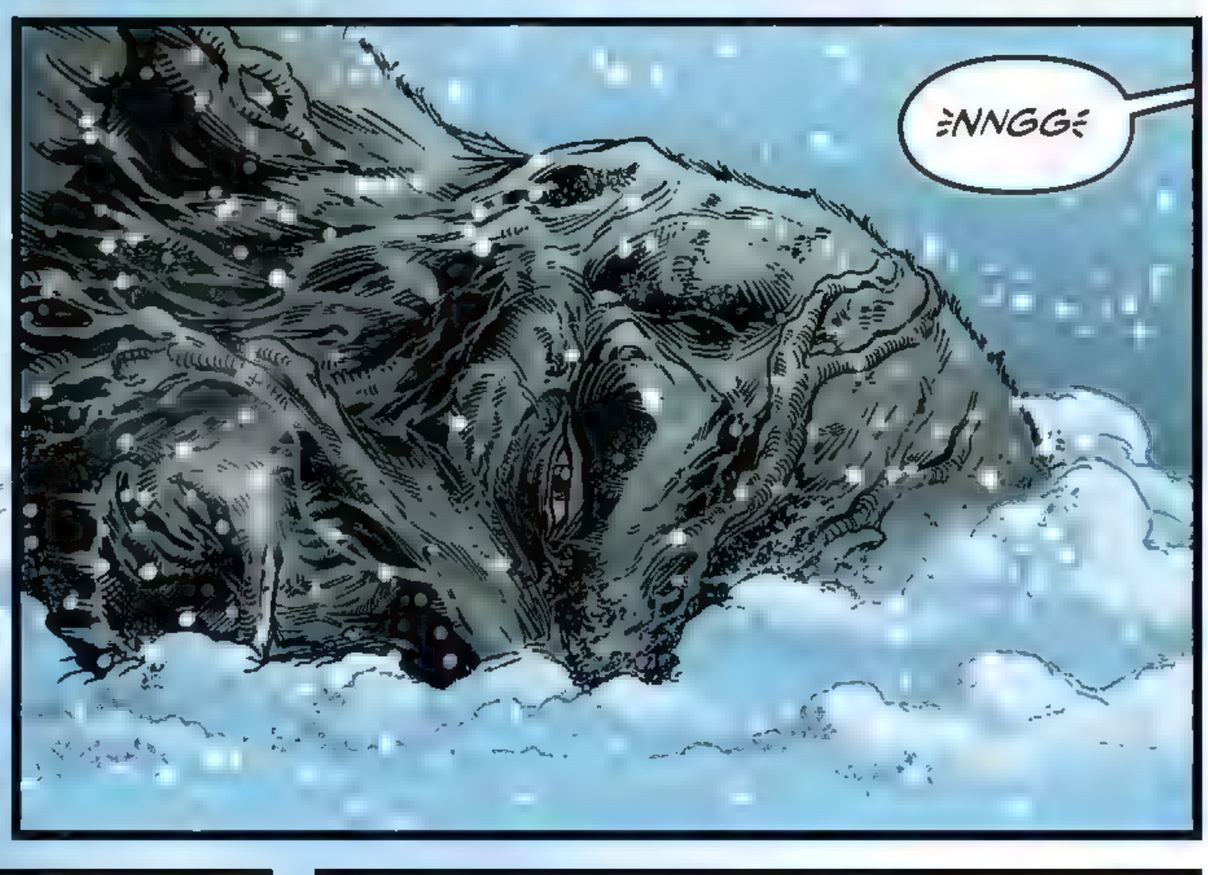
Later.
I AM SORRY...
I AM SORRY...
I AM SORRY...
PLEASE.
YOU CAN'T STOP.
HE'S STILL OUT THERE.

Later.
DID YOU EVER HAVE A BOY OR A KID?
I DON'T... REMEMBER...
MY DAD IS GONE. I KNOW.
BUT YOU'RE HERE, AND YOU'RE HELPING ME.
KIND OF LIKE A DAD DOES.
I...
AND MAYBE YOU COULD BE MY DAD, OR MY PRETEND DAD.
THEN YOU WOULDN'T BE A THING. YOU'D BE A DAD. A PRETEND DAD.
I COULD BE YOUR PRETEND SON. IN THE SNOW.
YES...
IN THE... SNOW...

Later.
YESTERDAY HE WAS SO CLOSE!
IF YOU HADN'T KICKED HIM...

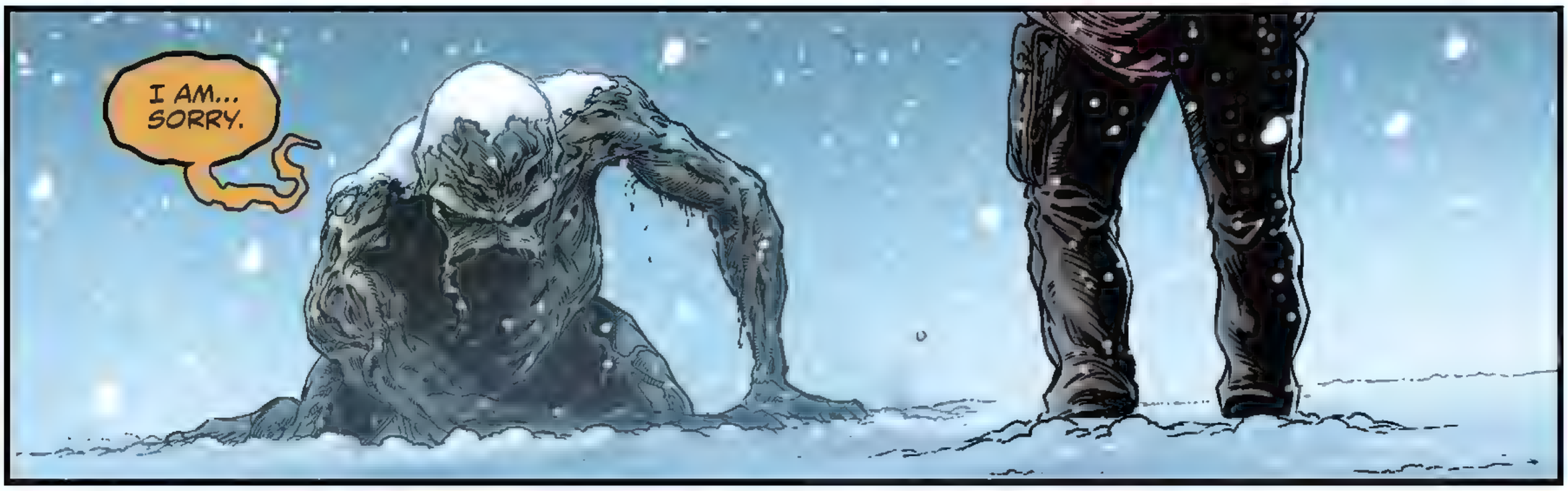
...THE SNOW MONSTER WOULD'VE GOTTEN YOU.

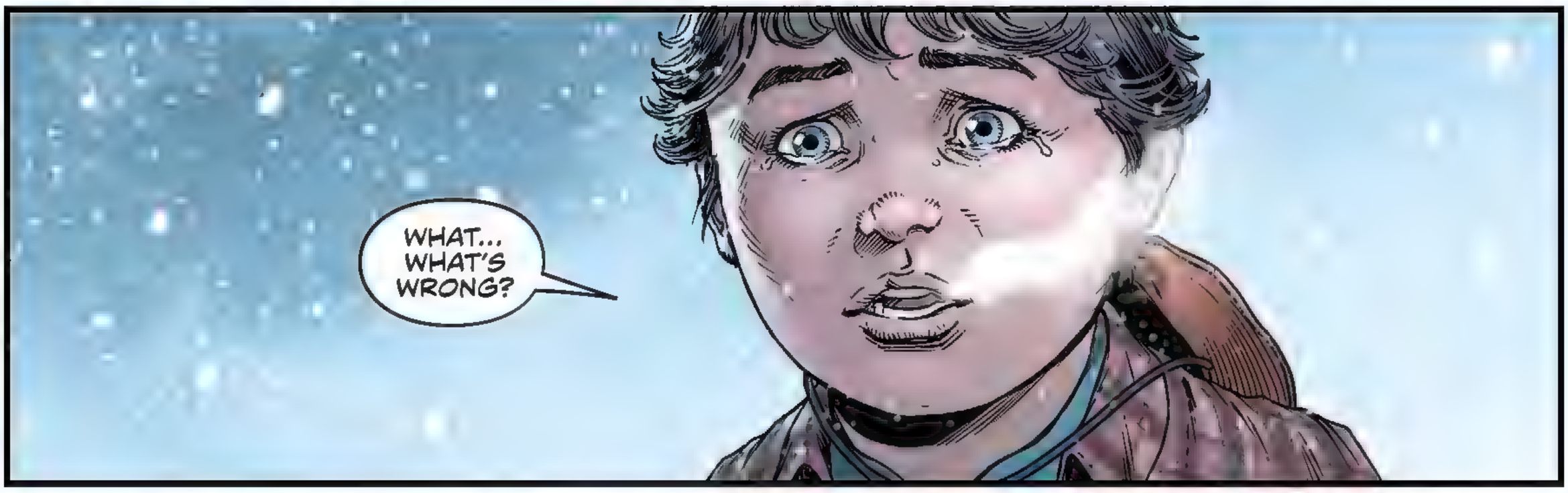
WAIT--!

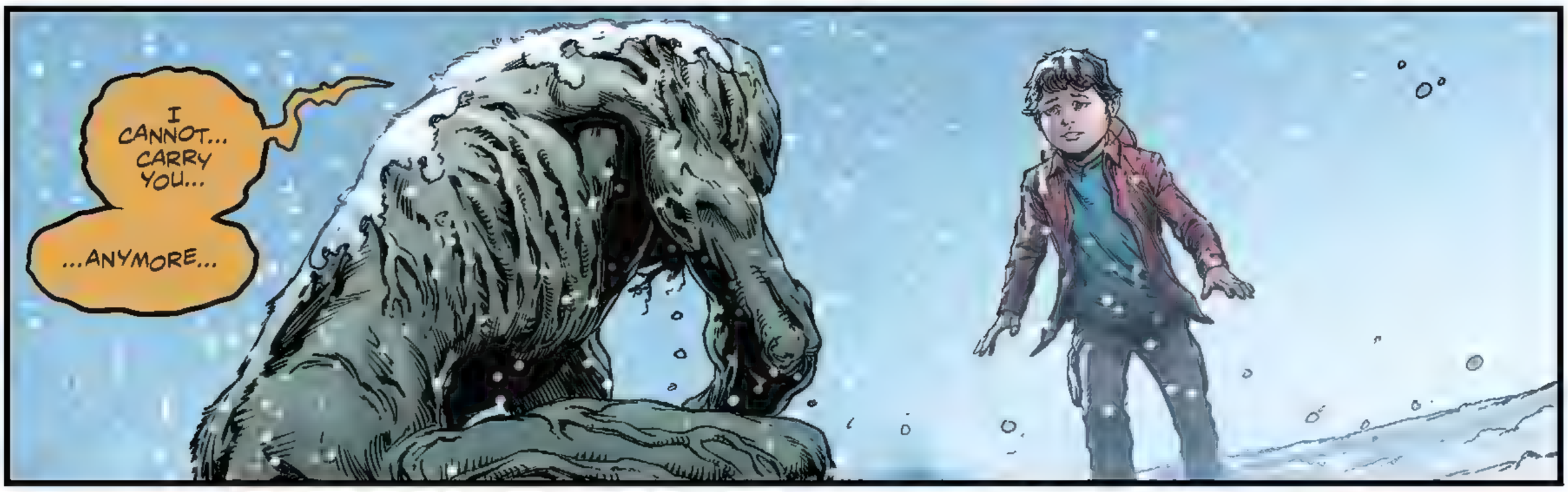

NNGG

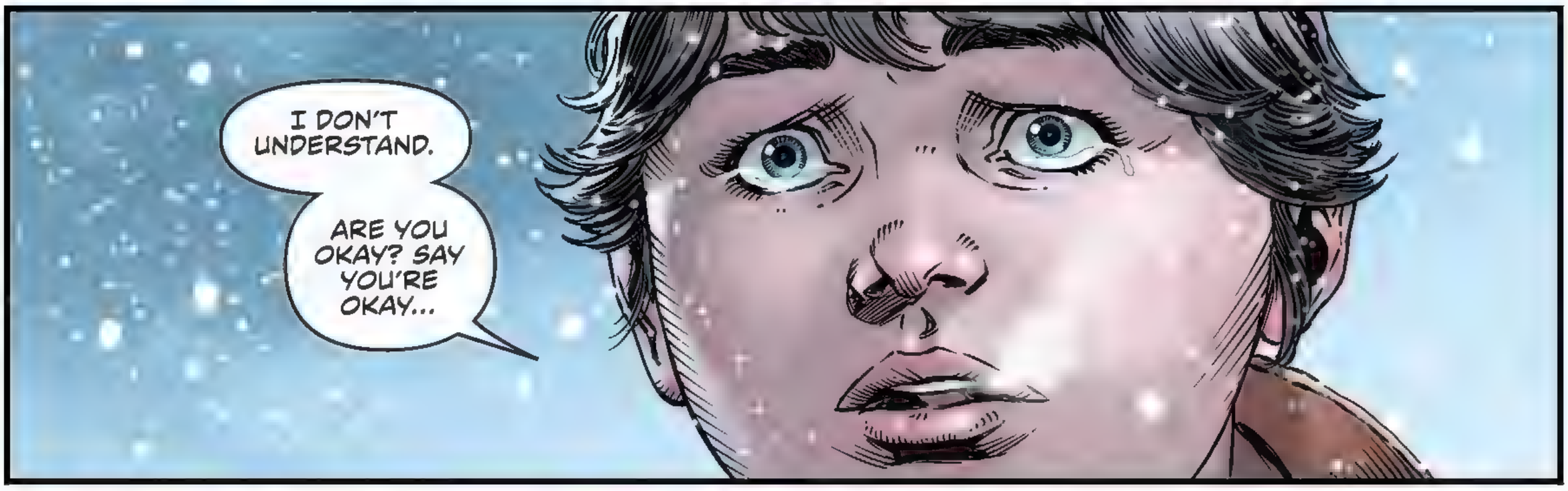
SWAMP THING?

WE...
...WE HAVE TO KEEP GOING.


I AM... SORRY.


WHAT... WHAT'S WRONG?

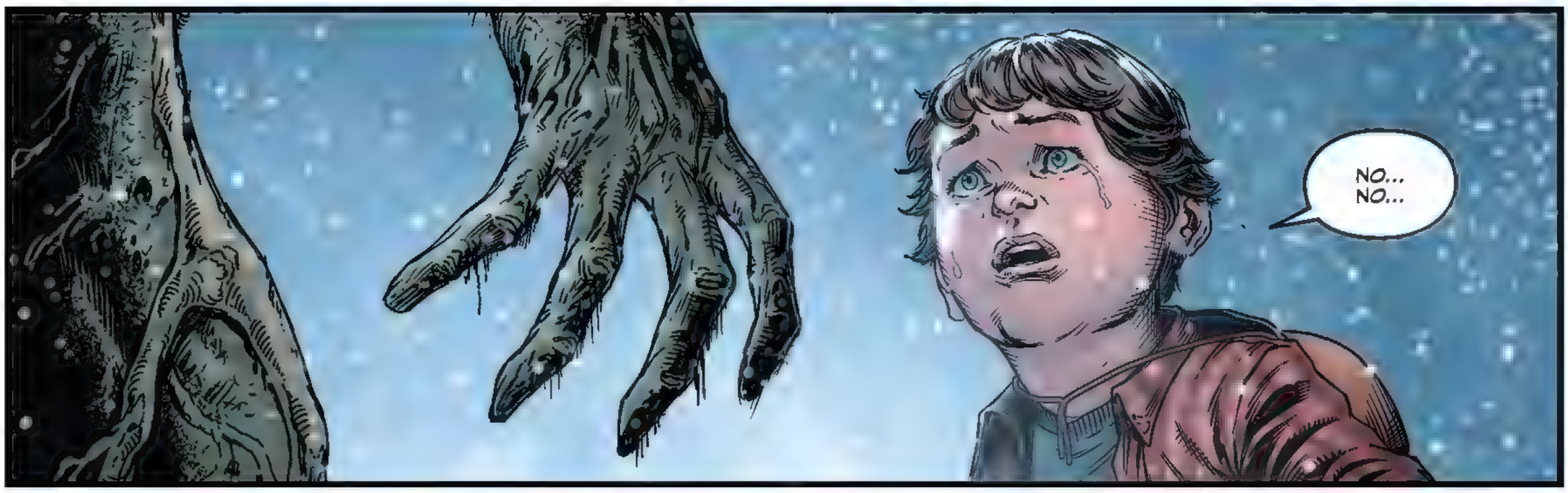

I CANNOT... CARRY YOU...
...ANYMORE...


I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
ARE YOU OKAY? SAY YOU'RE OKAY...

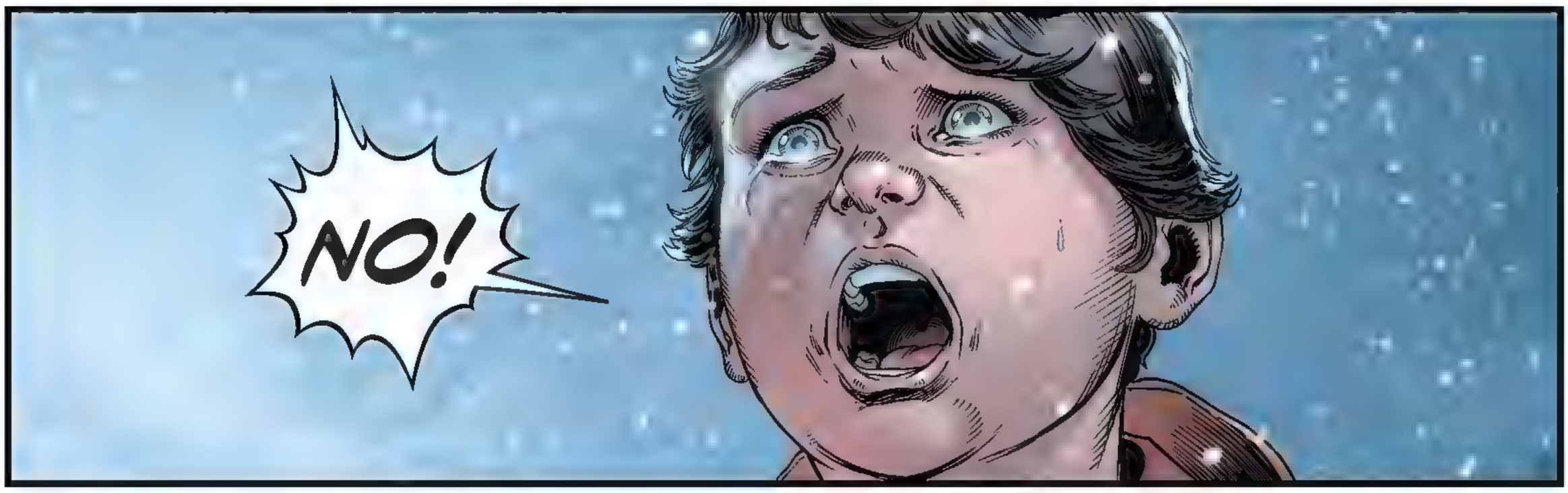
I CANNOT... BECAUSE...
...YOU...

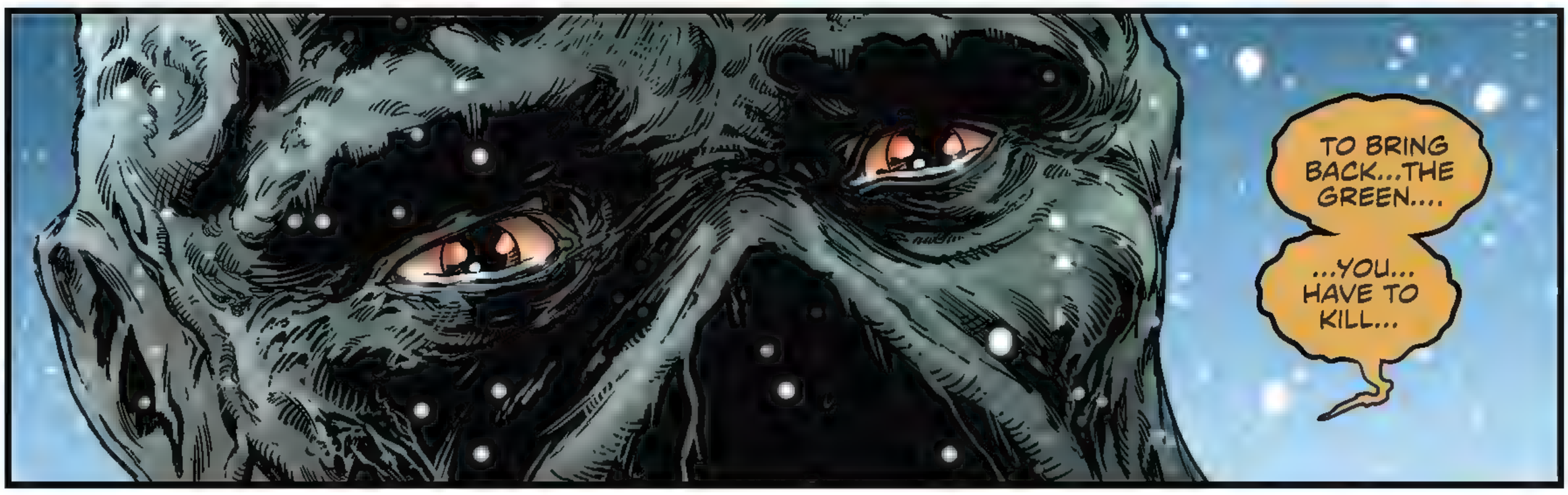
YOU... ARE THE... MONSTER.

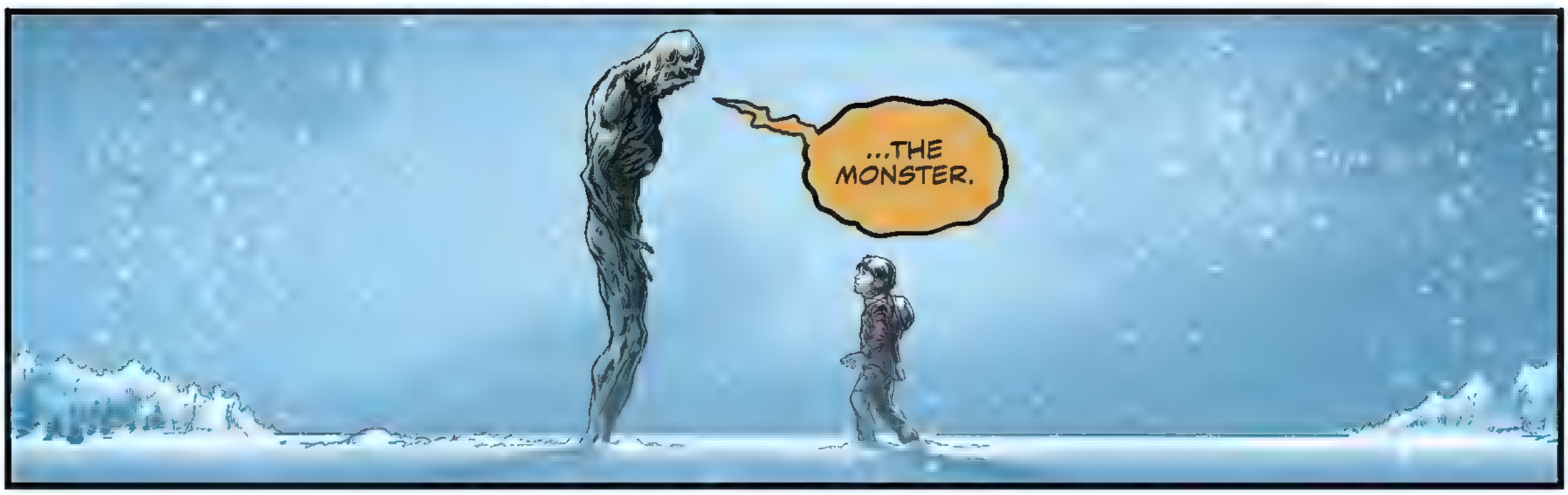
I MUST KNOW...EVERY DAY...
I MUST... CHOOSE TO FORGET EVERY DAY...
BUT I CANNOT... FORGET...ANY... LONGER...
I DON'T REMEMBER...HOW LONG WE HAVE BEEN...
BUT I KNOW... HOW...LONG...IT TAKES...FOR ME TO BE...LIKE THIS...
WITHOUT THE... GREEN...
YEARS.
AND AFTER... YEARS IN THIS... COLD...
YOU...A BOY...
YOU... WOULD BE... DEAD.


NO...
NO...

I MUST HAVE TRIED... NOT TO...
BUT...I... HAVE TO... KILL YOU...
DON'T I?

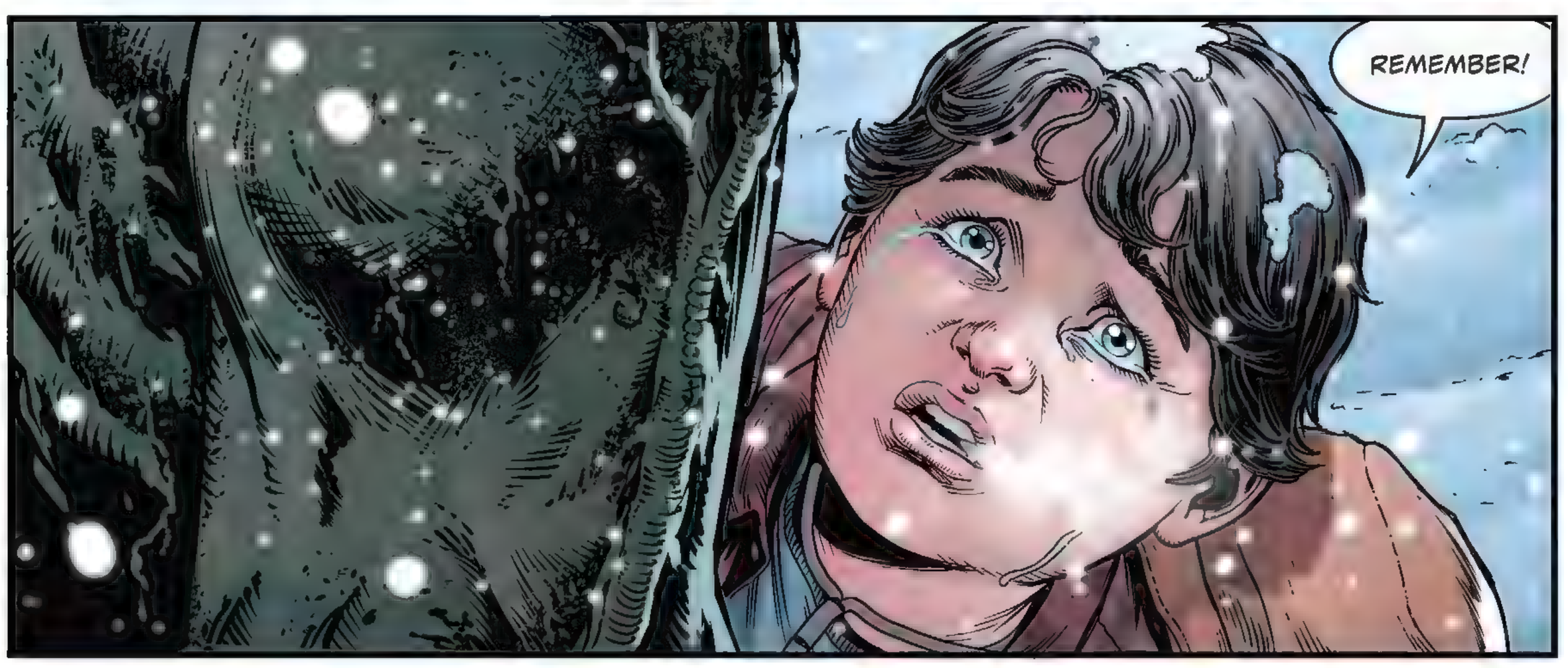

NO!


TO BRING BACK...THE GREEN....
...YOU... HAVE TO KILL...


...THE MONSTER.

BUT...
...YOU'RE A HERO.

YOU FOUGHT THE SNOW MONSTER!
AND YOU SAVED ME!


REMEMBER!

YOU ARE... A CHILD... COULD BE MY CHILD.
I... DO NOT WANT...
...TO HURT... YOU...

I...WANT... TO HELP YOU...
IT IS... ALL...I WANT...

WHICH IS WHY...
THAT IS WHY...ISN'T IT?

I KNOW...I DON'T REMEMBER... IT ALL...

BUT I REMEMBER...

I REMEMBER, BOY...

I REMEMBER... *CARING* FOR YOU...

...DEEPLY.

YOU MAKE ME THINK...

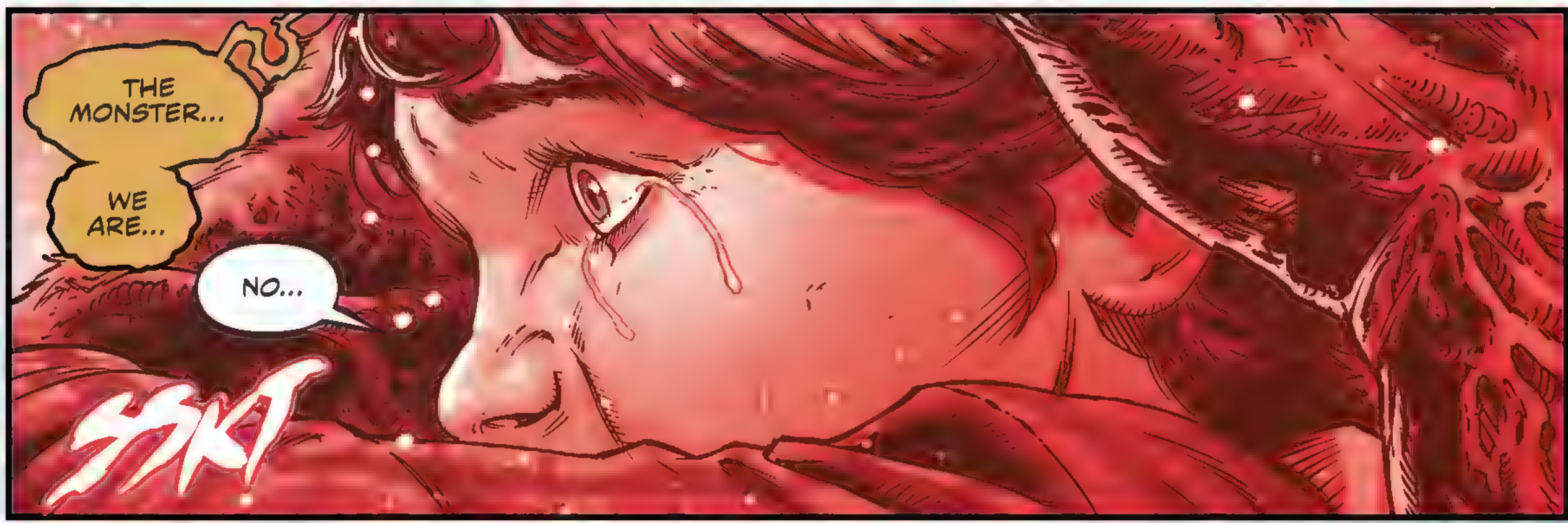
...FEEL... I AM... GOOD.

PLEASE, DON'T KILL ME.
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE.

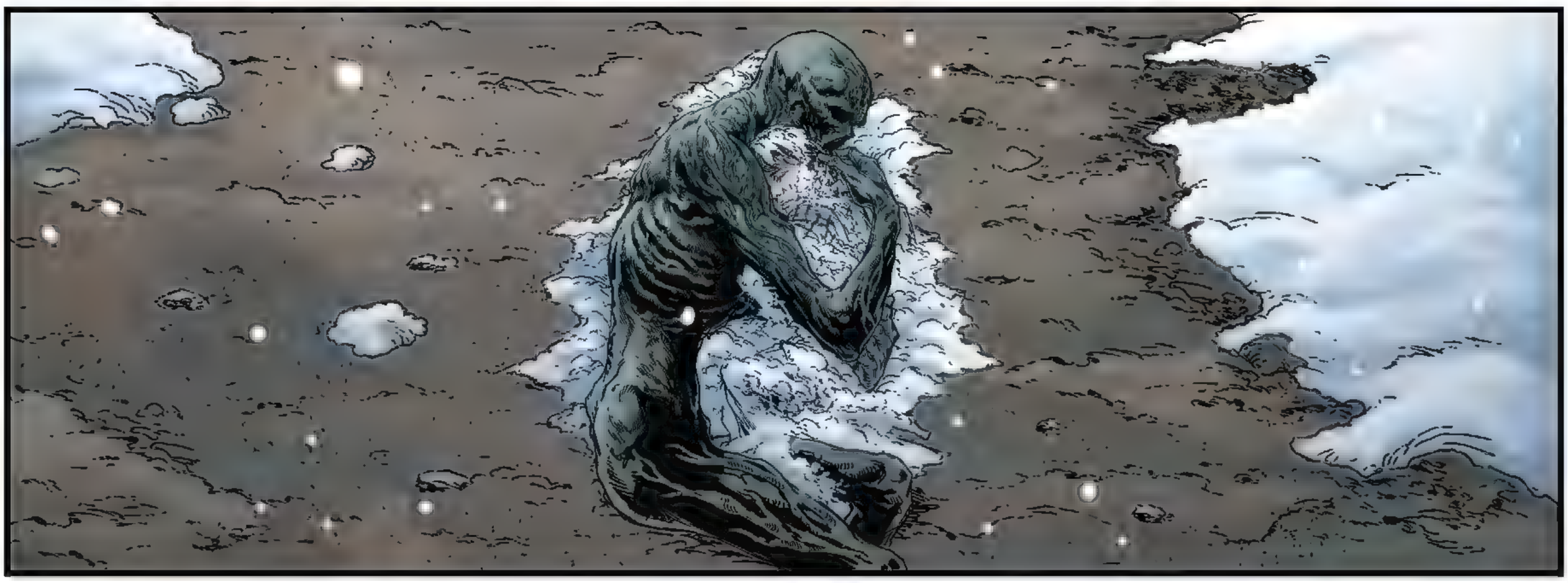
BUT... YOU...DID YOU...DO THIS...
THIS IS...WHAT A... MONSTER DOES.
YOU... SHOW... EVERYONE... ME...

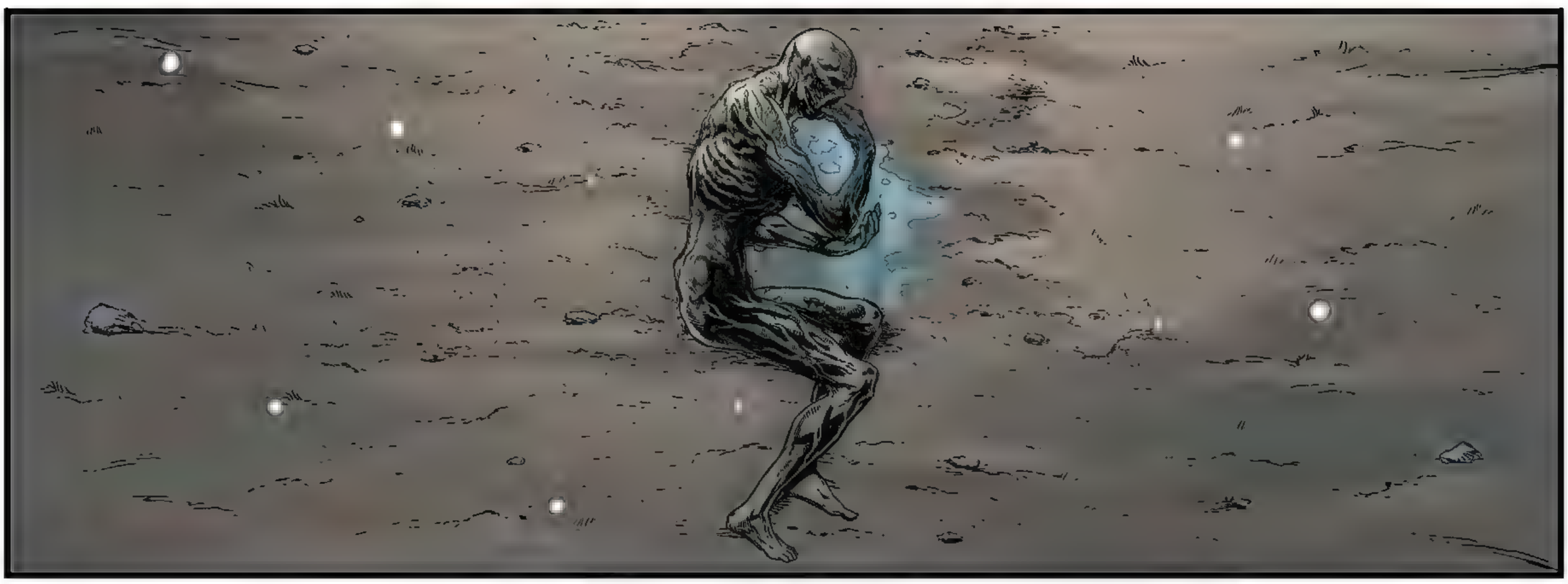
YOU SHOW... ME...
NO... NO...
PLEASE.

THAT THOUGH I TRY...
TRY...SO HARD...
...I AM...LIKE YOU...NOW... ALWAYS...

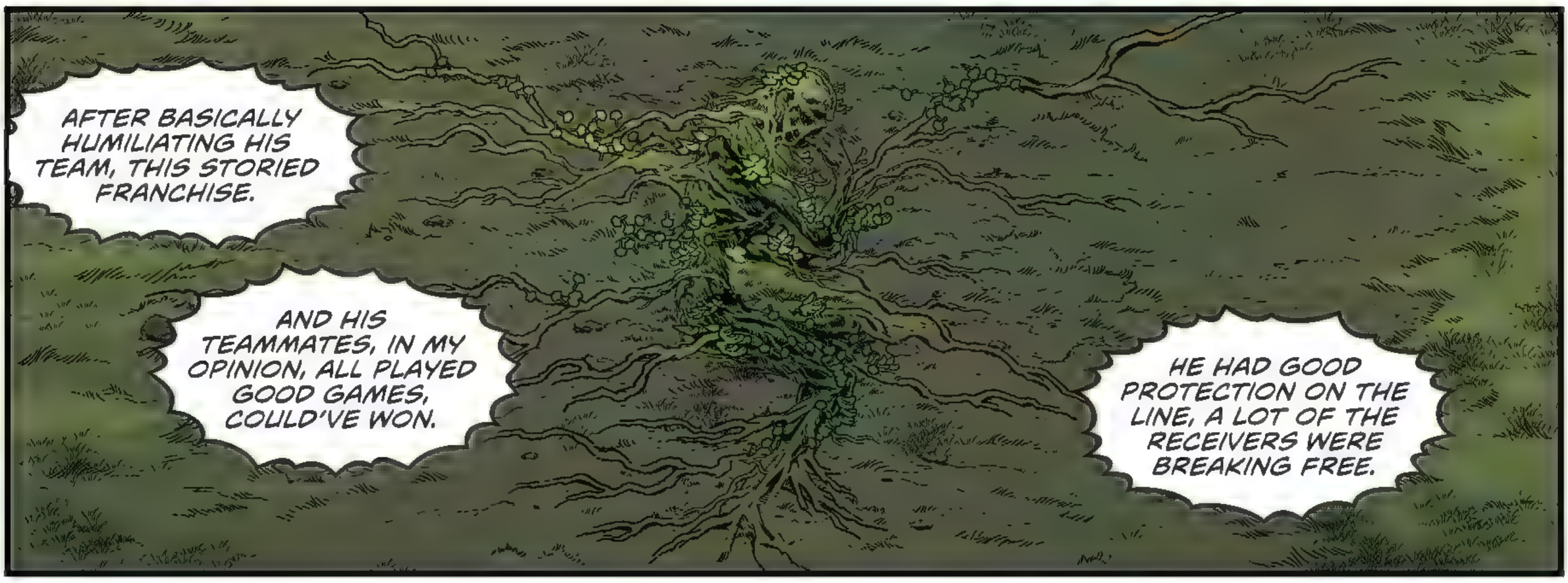

THE MONSTER...
WE ARE...
NO...
SOKI

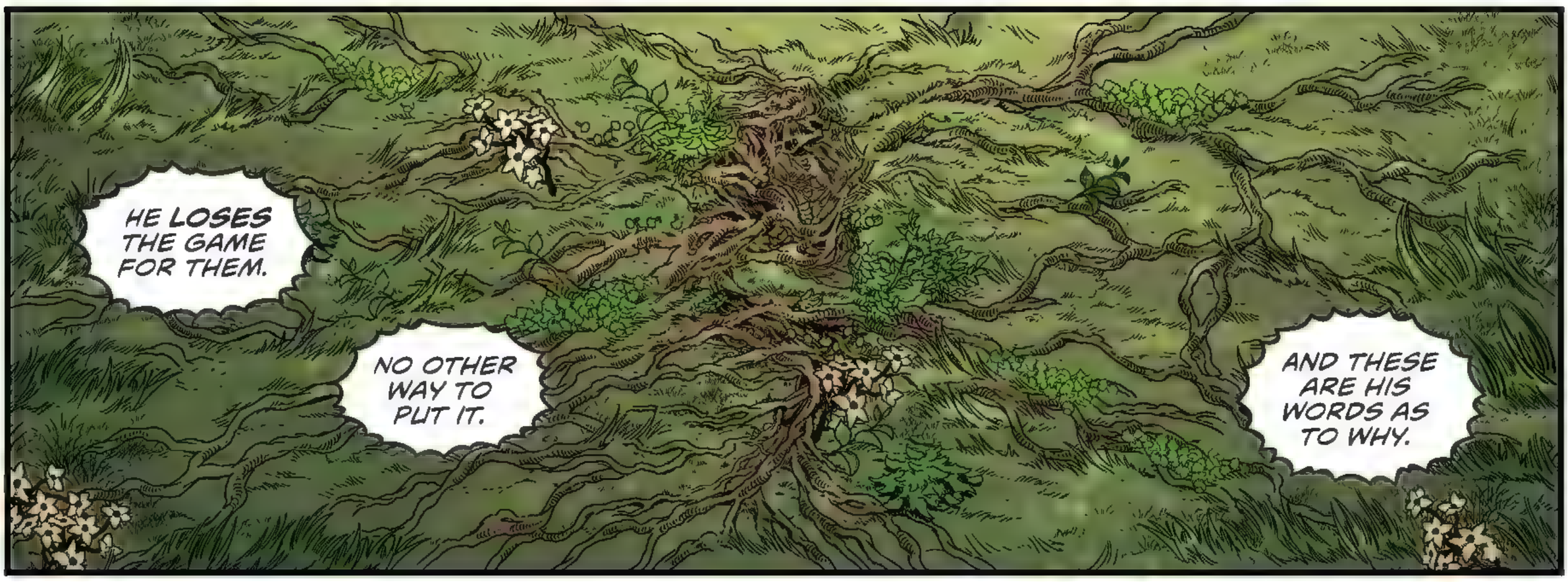
...THE MONSTER...





SO THERE YOU HAVE IT.
THE BEST EXPLANATION CAMPBELL COULD COME UP WITH.
OR MAYBE AN EXCUSE, I THINK IS A BETTER WORD.

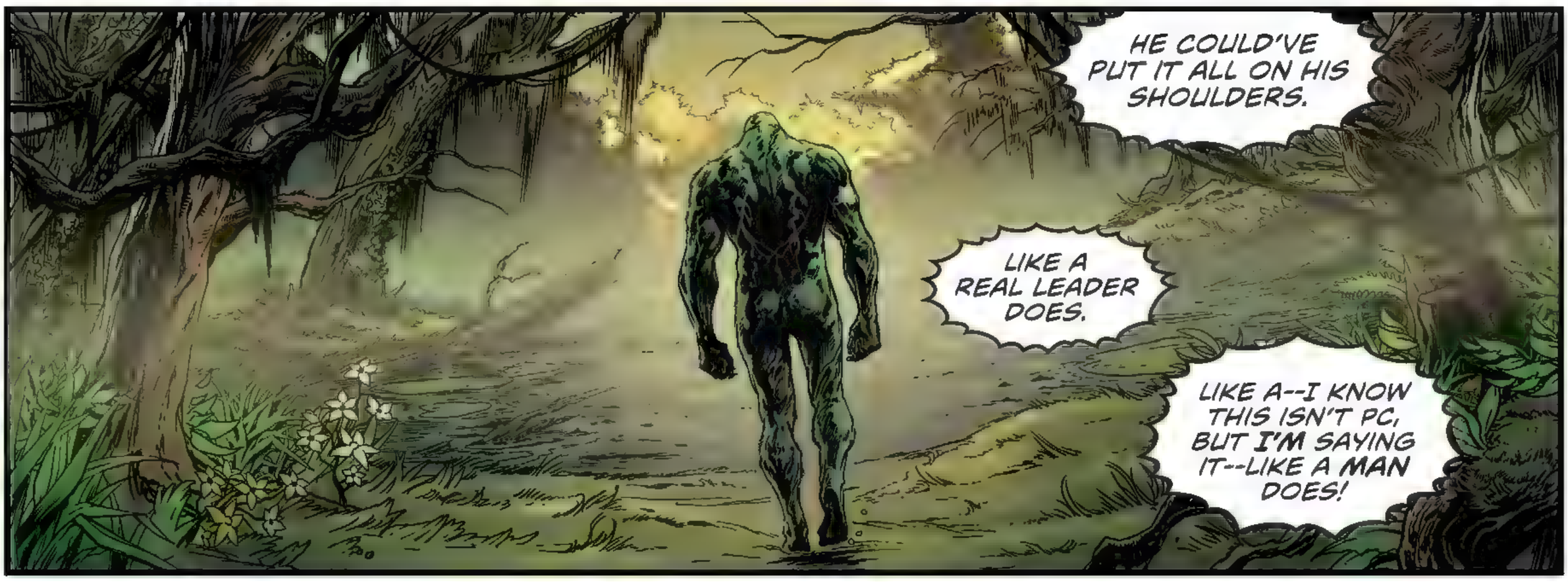

AFTER BASICALLY HUMILIATING HIS TEAM, THIS STORIED FRANCHISE.
AND HIS TEAMMATES, IN MY OPINION, ALL PLAYED GOOD GAMES, COULD'VE WON.
HE HAD GOOD PROTECTION ON THE LINE, A LOT OF THE RECEIVERS WERE BREAKING FREE.

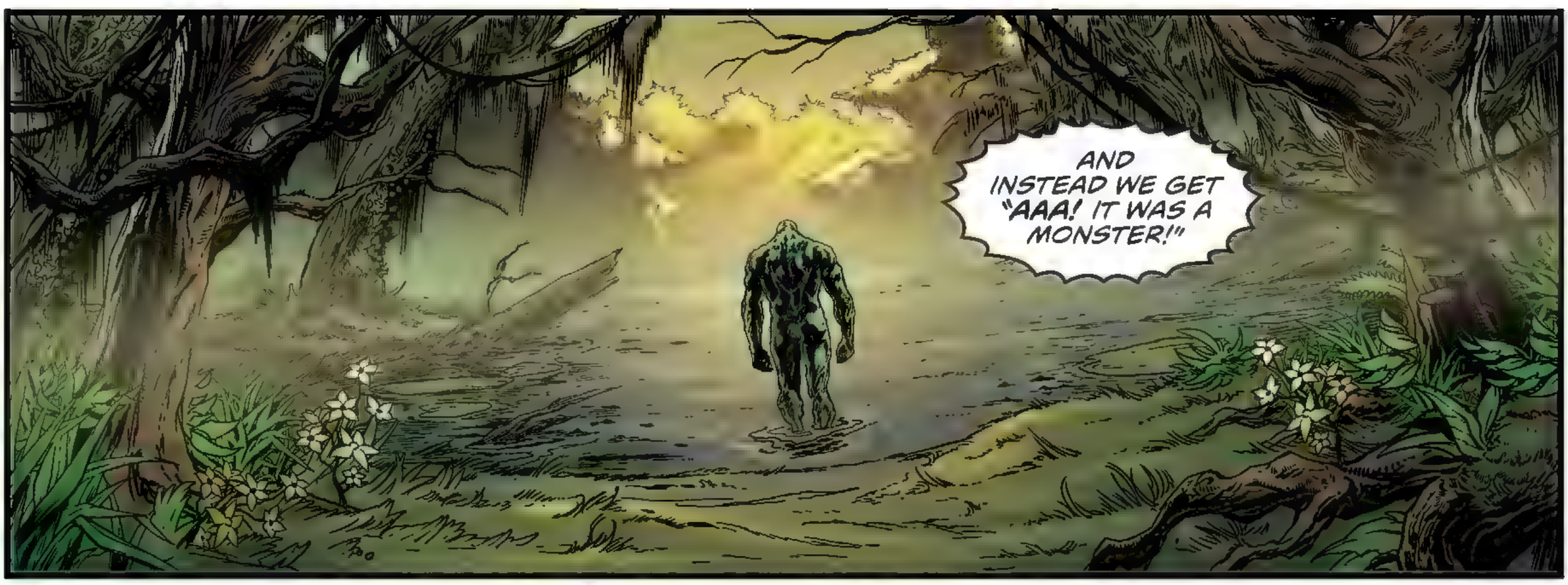

HE LOSES THE GAME FOR THEM.
NO OTHER WAY TO PUT IT.
AND THESE ARE HIS WORDS AS TO WHY.

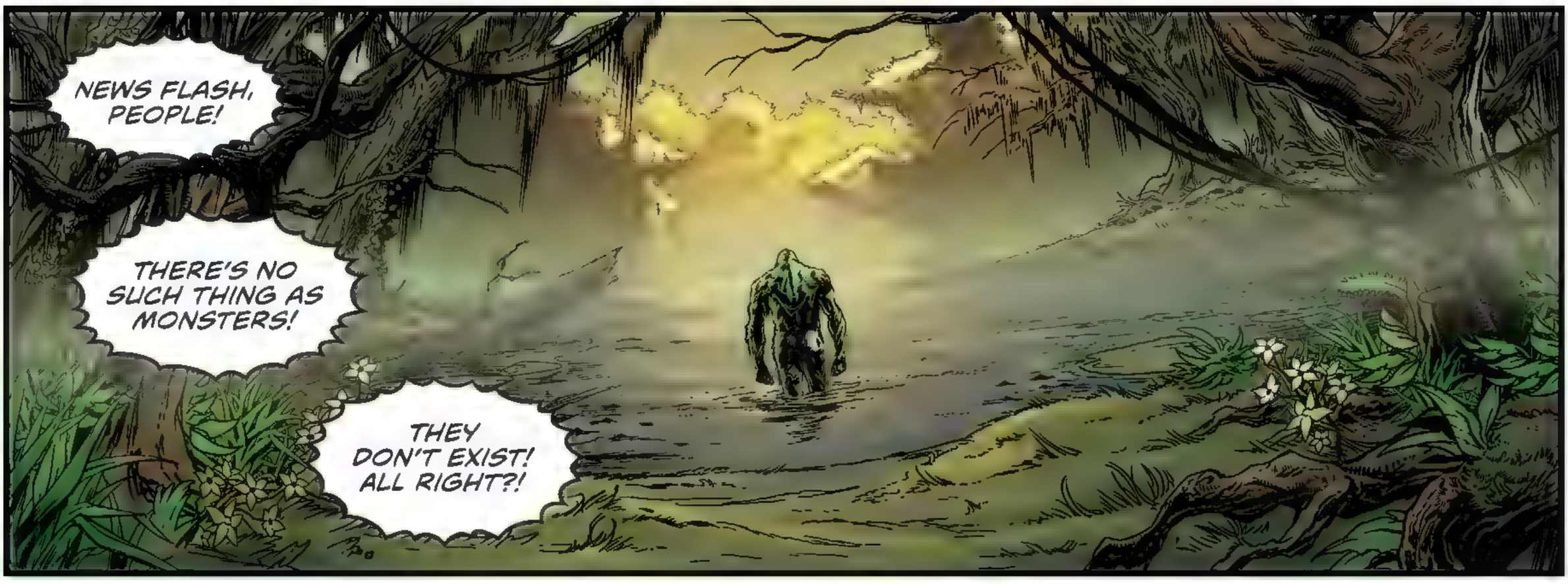
"IT WAS A MONSTER."

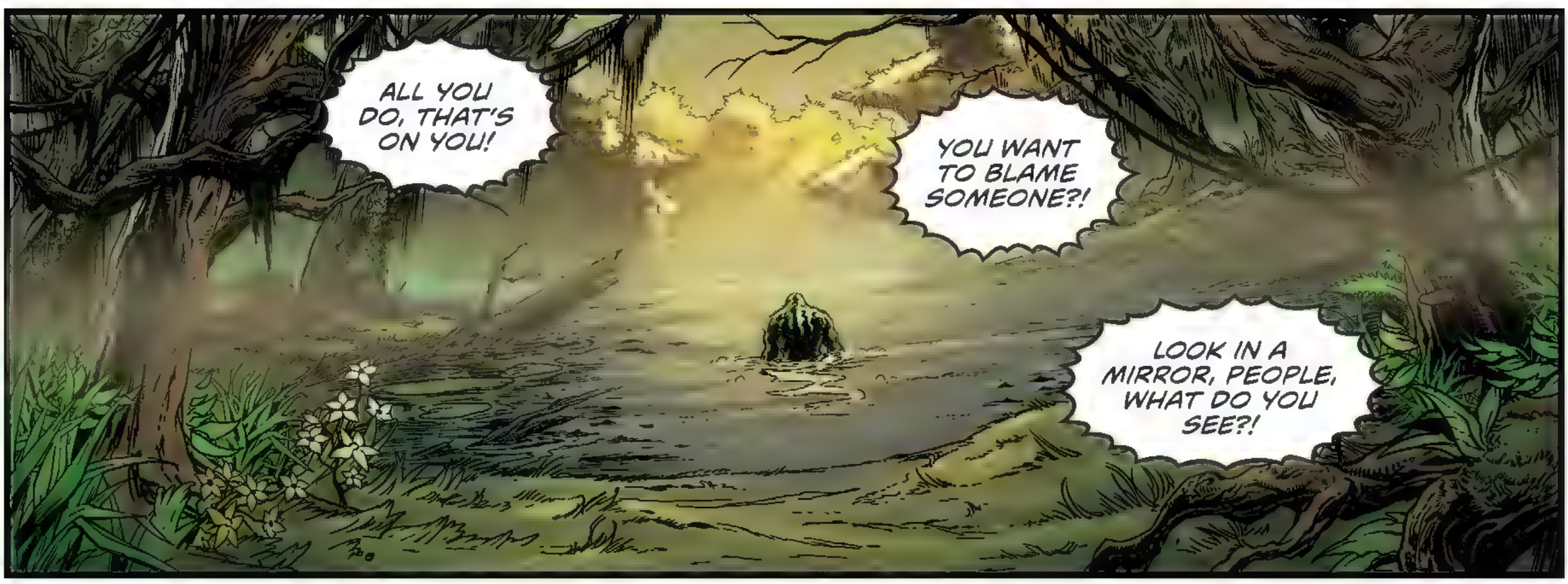
IS THAT WHAT WE NEED TO HEAR, OR WHAT HIS TEAM NEEDS TO HEAR?
WHAT ABOUT, "THE DEFENSE HAD ME"? OR "I NEED MORE REPS."
OR ANYTHING.

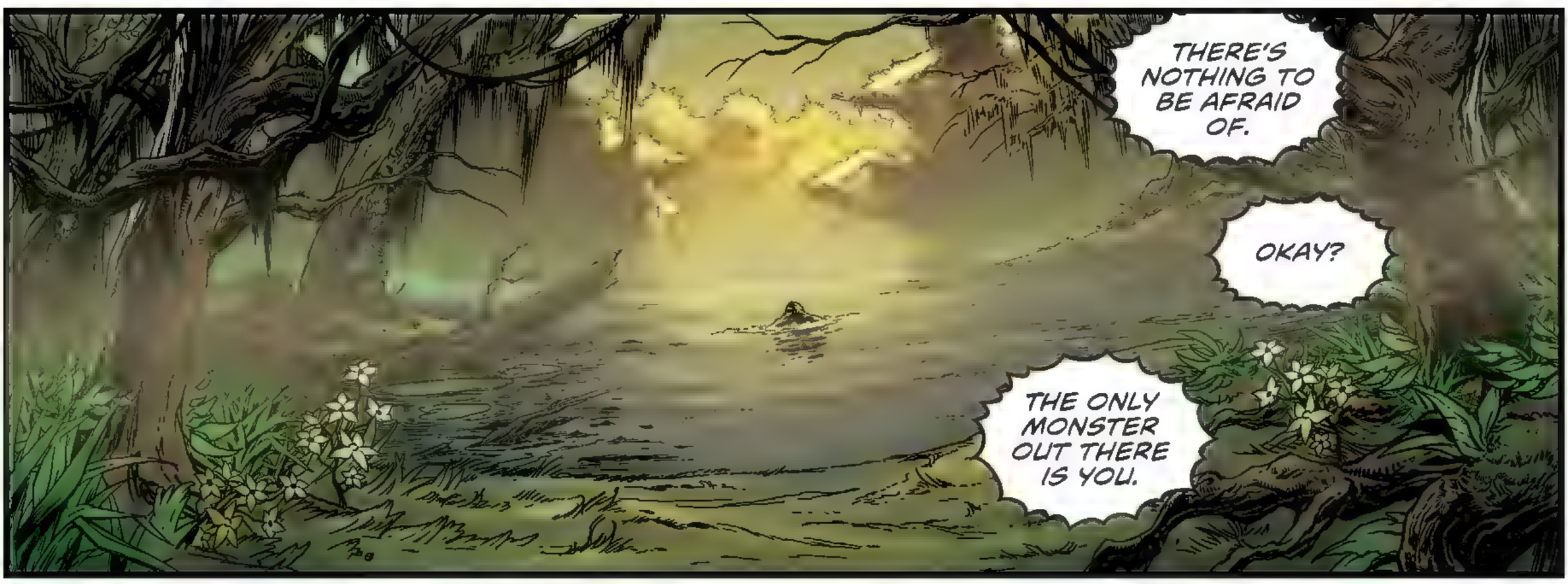
HOW ABOUT, "THIS ONE'S ON ME"?
WHY CAN'T CAMPBELL JUST SAY THAT?
"I MESSED UP. IT'S MY FAULT. I'LL DO BETTER."

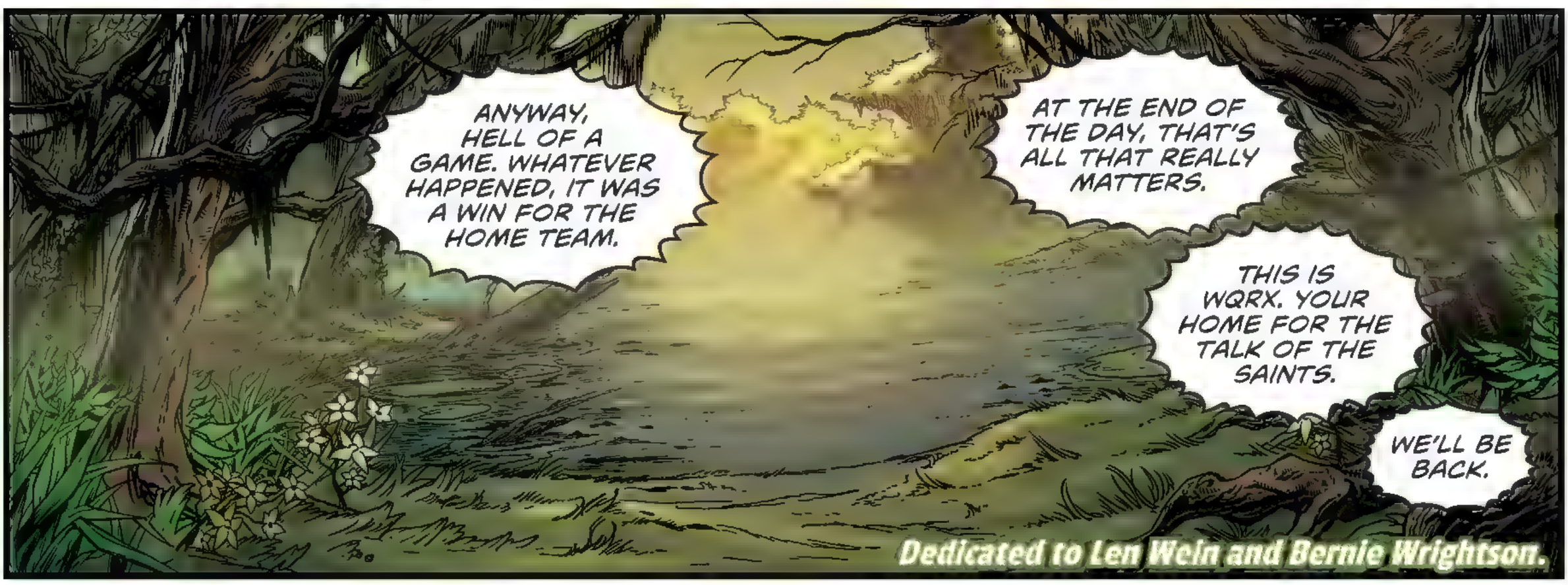

HE COULD'VE PUT IT ALL ON HIS SHOULDERS.
LIKE A REAL LEADER DOES.
LIKE A--I KNOW THIS ISN'T PC, BUT I'M SAYING IT--LIKE A MAN DOES!

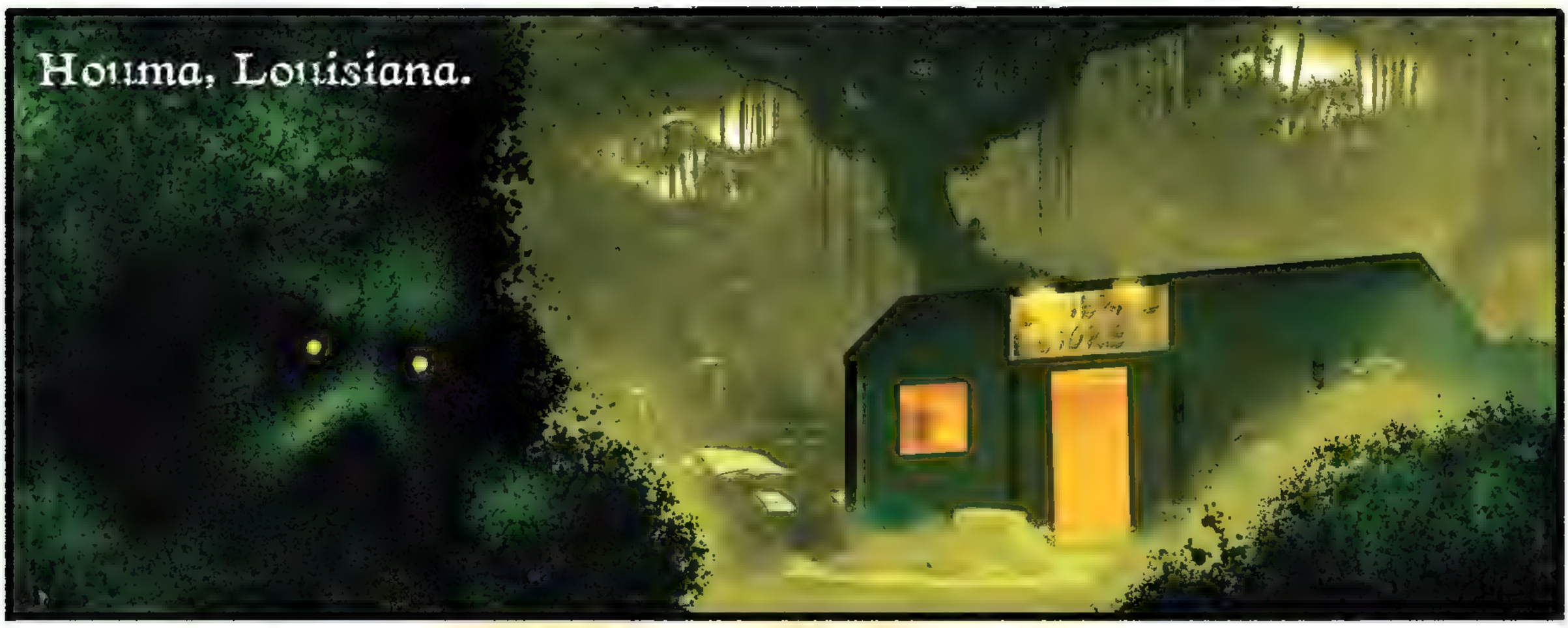

AND INSTEAD WE GET "AAA! IT WAS A MONSTER!"


NEWS FLASH, PEOPLE!
THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS MONSTERS!
THEY DON'T EXIST! ALL RIGHT?!


ALL YOU DO, THAT'S ON YOU!
YOU WANT TO BLAME SOMEONE?!
LOOK IN A MIRROR, PEOPLE, WHAT DO YOU SEE?!


THERE'S NOTHING TO BE AFRAID OF.
OKAY?
THE ONLY MONSTER OUT THERE IS YOU.


ANYWAY, HELL OF A GAME. WHATEVER HAPPENED, IT WAS A WIN FOR THE HOME TEAM.
AT THE END OF THE DAY, THAT'S ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS.
THIS IS WQRX. YOUR HOME FOR THE TALK OF THE SAINTS.
WE'LL BE BACK.
Dedicated to Len Wein and Bernie Wrightson.


Houma, Louisiana.

DID YOU GET IT?
OH YEAH, I GOT IT.
Girl, been Chicken you out

I CANNOT GIVE HER THIS.
IT'S A TINY STORE! THEY ONLY GOT LIKE THREE VALENTINE'S CARDS!
THEN GET ONE OF THE OTHER TWO!

SIGH.
THANK YOU, GUILLAUME. I WANT EVERYTHING TO BE PERFECT.
YOU HAVE A BIG HEART, MON COPAIN!
TERRI... SHE'S THE ONLY ONE WHO UNDERSTANDS ME.
WELL, SHE IS A BOTANIST.
IT HAD BEEN SO LONG. I THOUGHT I'D NEVER LOVE AGAIN.
I WILL NEVER FORGET THE DAY WE FIRST MET.
OH MY GOD!
I'M SO SORRY. I DIDN'T THINK ANYBODY ELSE WAS OUT HERE.
IT'S OKAY. I'M PRETTY MUCH ALWAYS NAKED.

I'M TERRI... TERRI FARMS. WHO ARE YOU? ***WHAT*** ARE YOU?

IT'S COMPLICATED.

IN MY LIFE, I HAVE BEEN CALLED A CREATURE, A SUPERHERO, A MONSTER. I'M NOT SURE I UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE. NO MATTER HOW NICE THEY ARE, NO MATTER HOW THEY SMILE AT YOU, THEY ALL HAVE THAT SAME LOOK IN THE BACK OF THEIR EYES. THE LOOK OF FEAR. EVERYONE...EXCEPT FOR TERRI.

YOU CAN MAKE CLOTHES OUT OF IT, OR USE IT FOR INSULATION. AT ONE POINT, EVERY FORD ON THE STREET USED SPANISH MOSS IN ITS SEAT CUSHIONS.

IT HAS SO MUCH TO GIVE THE WORLD, AND PEOPLE TREAT IT LIKE A WEED.

SHE SHOWED ME A BEAUTY IN MYSELF THAT I NEVER KNEW EXISTED.

IT'S A MIRACLE OF EVOLUTION, AND PEOPLE DO WHATEVER THEY CAN TO GET RID OF IT.

SHE AWAKENED SOMETHING IN ME. THAT STRANGE MIXTURE OF VULNERABILITY AND FAITH. I HAD ALMOST FORGOTTEN... THAT THIS IS THE FEELING OF BEING ***HUMAN.***

WOULD YOU... JOIN ME FOR DINNER TONIGHT?

OKAY, BUT JUST SO YOU KNOW, I'M A VEGETARIAN. OH GOD. THAT'S NOT AN OFFENSIVE TERM, IS IT?

I INTRODUCED HER TO MY FRIENDS IN THE BAYOU. FLORA AND FAUNA. I HAD NOT DONE THAT SINCE...

HER NAME IS ETOUFFÉ. SHE LIKES HOT DOGS.

IS THIS WHERE YOU BRING ALL THE GIRLS?

ONLY ONE. HER NAME WAS ABBY. SHE...SHE WAS MY WIFE.

SO WHAT BECAME OF HER?

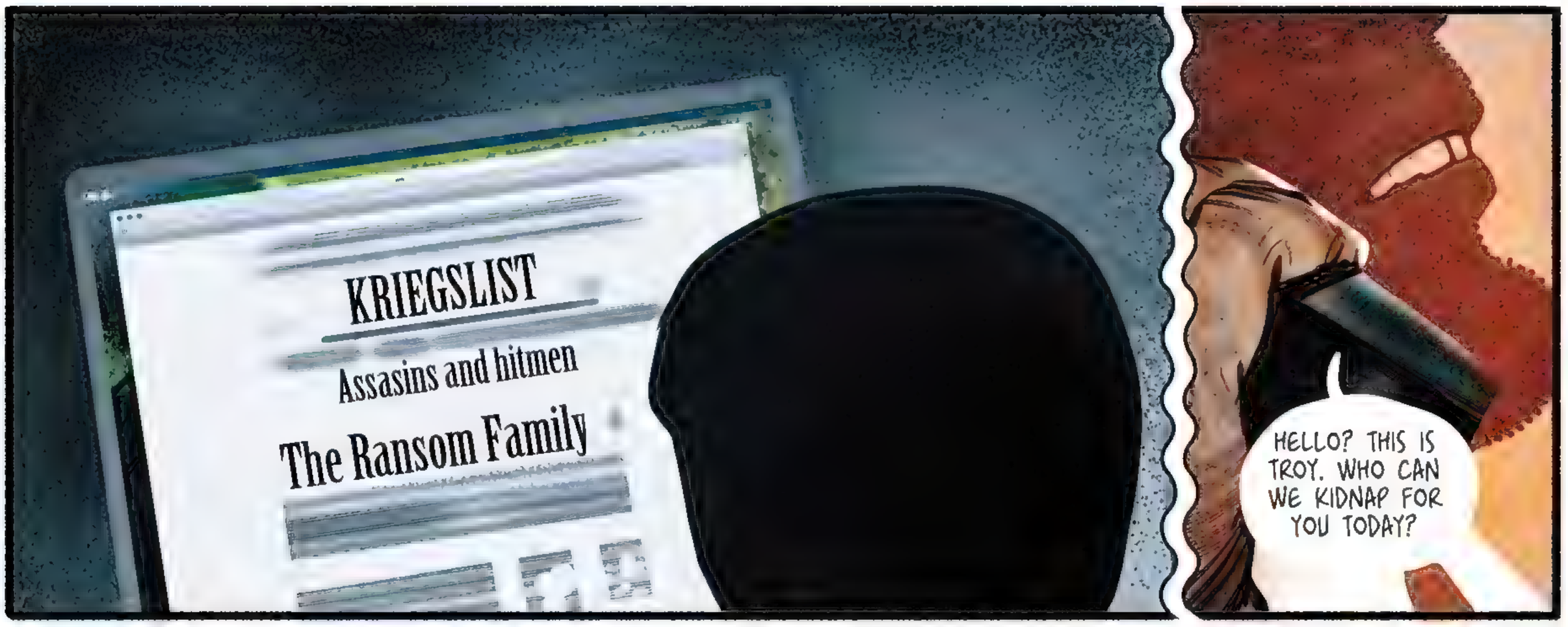
THEY... THEY TOOK HER FROM ME.

I'M SO SORRY.

I MOSTLY KEEP TO MYSELF NOW...STAY OUT OF VIEW.

AGGRO CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS. GIVING BACK AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES--
YEAH, WHATEVER. JUST PUT ME THROUGH TO THE OLD MAN.
OUR SURVEILLANCE DRONES IN LOUISIANA CAUGHT THESE IMAGES YESTERDAY. THEY SEEM TO CONFIRM THE EXISTENCE OF THE "SWAMP THING."
HOLY GOD! I ALWAYS THOUGHT HE WAS AN URBAN LEGEND.

I WANT TO BRING HIM IN. GET A CLOSER LOOK.
SHOULD I GET THE TEAM TOGETHER?
NO, WE DON'T YET KNOW WHAT WE'RE DEALING WITH. WHY DON'T WE USE LOCALS? YOU KNOW...GIVE BACK AND CREATE OPPORTUNITIES?
SOMEONE EXPENDABLE. GOT IT.


KRIEGSLIST
Assasins and hitmen
The Ransom Family
HELLO? THIS IS TROY. WHO CAN WE KIDNAP FOR YOU TODAY?

I HADN'T GIVEN ANYONE A VALENTINE IN DECADES. I HOPE I DID IT RIGHT. ECSTASY TINGED WITH FEAR. I'D FORGOTTEN...THIS IS WHAT IT IS TO FEEL LOVE.
GHOST ORCHIDS! HOW DID YOU KNOW? I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO FIND A GHOST ORCHID IN THE WILD, BUT THEY'RE SO RARE. THEIR BLOOM SO SHORT.

YOU KNOW THE HUMAN HEART ISN'T REALLY SHAPED LIKE THAT, RIGHT?
I KNOW. I USED TO HAVE A HEART. IN FACT... I THINK I MIGHT STILL HAVE ONE.

OH YEAH? AND WHAT IS YOUR HEART SHAPED LIKE?
A BOX.
A BOX?

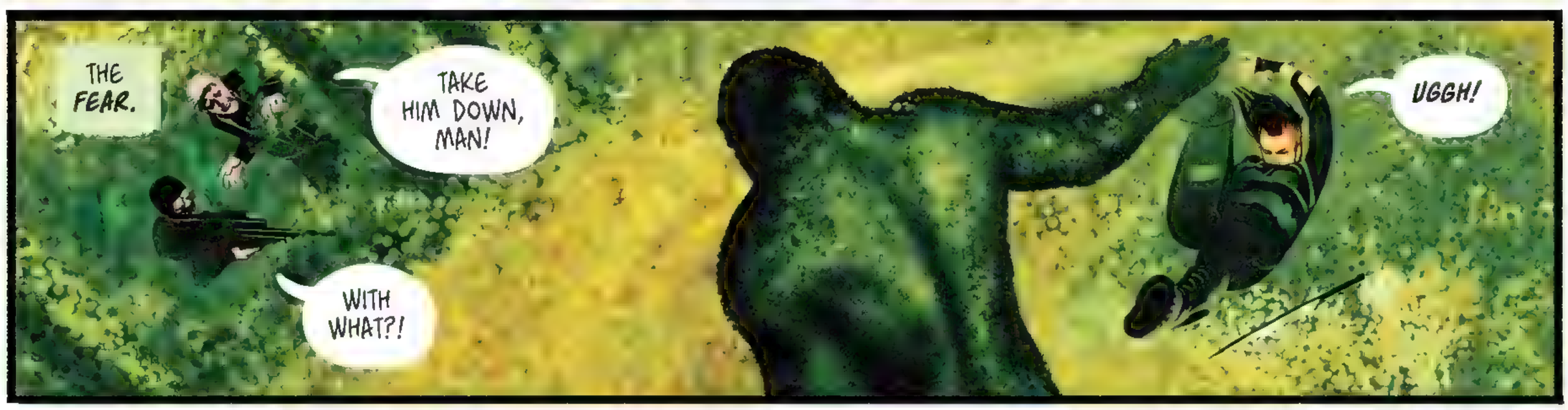
WHEN I'M IN LOVE, MY HEART FEELS LIKE A FORTRESS. LIKE IT WILL KEEP ME SAFE FROM WHATEVER THE WORLD SENDS AGAINST ME. WITHOUT LOVE, MY HEART BECOMES A PRISON WITHOUT A KEY.
YOU MAY NOT BE A MAN, BUT YOU'RE THE SWEETEST MAN I'VE EVER KNOWN. YOU OLD SOFTIE.
IT WAS TRUE. AT THAT MOMENT, I FELT AS IF NOTHING COULD HARM US.

I COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE WRONG.
WELL, SLAP MY MAMMY.
NET THE GIRL, THEN TAKE OUT THE MONSTER.
ON MY MARK...

I WANT TO REMEMBER THIS MOMENT FOREVER.
PFING

I WAS FOOLISH TO THINK IT WOULDN'T HAPPEN THIS TIME. TO IMAGINE THAT THE WORLD WOULD LET ME HAVE THIS HAPPINESS. TO LET ME LIVE...TO FEEL...AS A MAN.
FFFFFT
HUH?!

I HAD ALMOST FORGOTTEN WHAT I AM. BUT THEN I SAW IT. IN THEIR EYES.
WHAT--?


THE FEAR.
TAKE HIM DOWN, MAN!
WITH WHAT?!
UGGH!

APPARENTLY, THEY'D NEVER FOUGHT A PLANT BEFORE. THEY FAILED TO SO MUCH AS HURT ME.
AAAAAHH!
BLAM BLAM BLAM

AND YET, THAT DAY MY ENTIRE WORLD WAS DESTROYED.
ALEC...

AS USUAL, MEN FAIL TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURE OF THEIR PREY. THEY FAIL. THEY DESTROY ANYTHING THAT DOESN'T SERVE THEM. THEY WILL KILL EVEN THE RAREST OF FLOWERS. FOR THIS, THEY DESERVE TO DIE.

SCHWIRR

LIKE ME, THEY WILL SPEND THE REST OF THEIR LIVES TRAPPED INSIDE A PRISON WITHOUT A KEY.

KEEP WALKING. THERE'S GOT TO BE AN EXIT SOMEWHERE!

GOODBYE, MY LOVE. I WISH I COULD STAY WITH YOU LONGER. BUT SOON MORE MEN WILL COME. THEY WILL TAKE THIS BAYOU APART TO CAPTURE ME.

THE MAN WHO LIVED INSIDE ME DIED WITH YOU. ALL THAT IS LEFT FOR THE MONSTER IS TO GO.

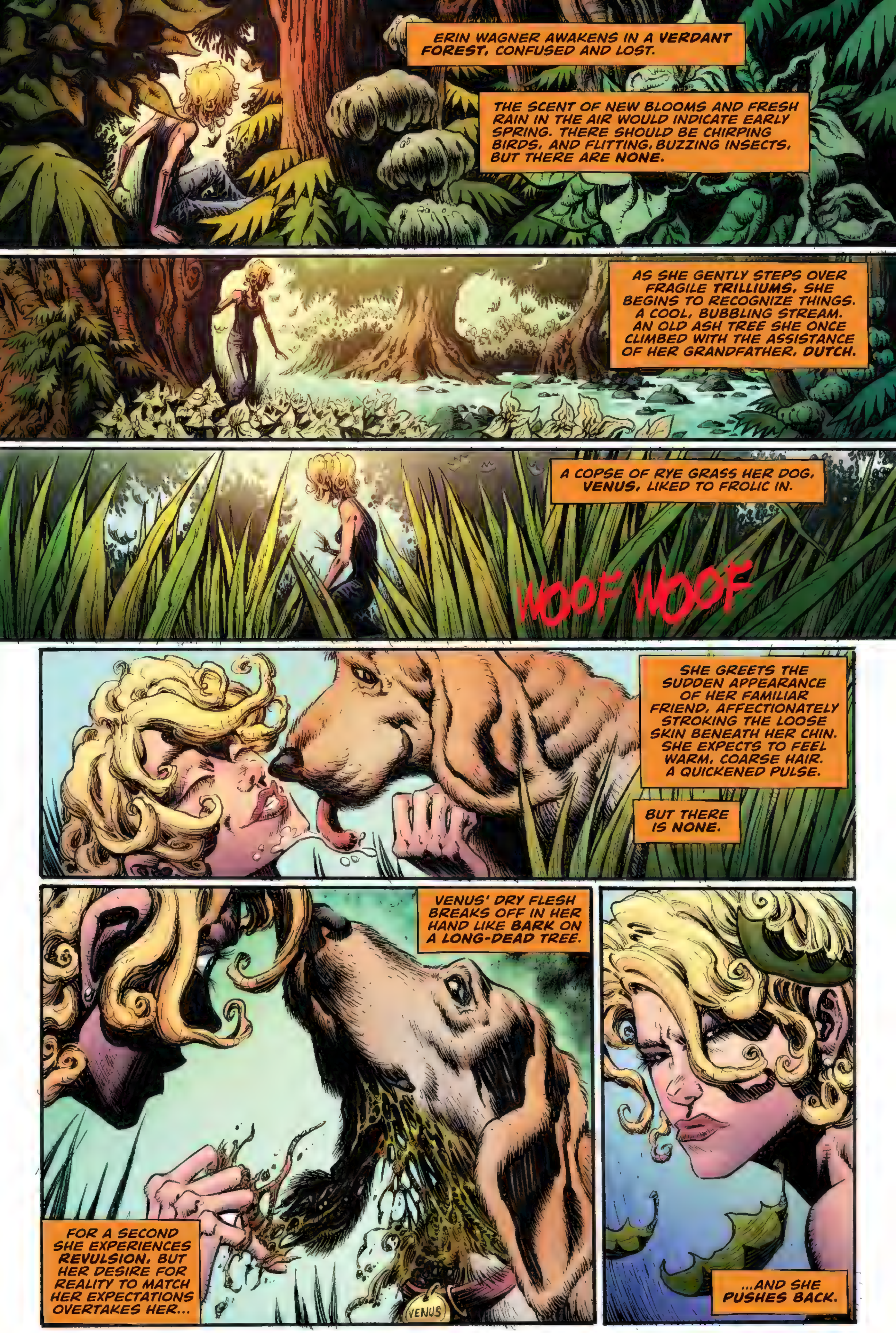
TO DISAPPEAR FOREVER.

The End.

SWAMP THING in...

"HEART-SHAPED BOX"

MARK RUSSELL writer
FRAZER IRVING artist
TRAVIS LANHAM letters


ERIN WAGNER AWAKENS IN A VERDANT FOREST, CONFUSED AND LOST.
THE SCENT OF NEW BLOOMS AND FRESH RAIN IN THE AIR WOULD INDICATE EARLY SPRING. THERE SHOULD BE CHIRPING BIRDS, AND FLITTING, BUZZING INSECTS, BUT THERE ARE NONE.
AS SHE GENTLY STEPS OVER FRAGILE TRILLIUMS, SHE BEGINS TO RECOGNIZE THINGS. A COOL, BUBBLING STREAM. AN OLD ASH TREE SHE ONCE CLIMBED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF HER GRANDFATHER, DUTCH.
A COPSE OF RYE GRASS HER DOG, VENUS, LIKED TO FROLIC IN.
WOOF WOOF
SHE GREETS THE SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF HER FAMILIAR FRIEND, AFFECTIONATELY STROKING THE LOOSE SKIN BENEATH HER CHIN. SHE EXPECTS TO FEEL WARM, COARSE HAIR. A QUICKENED PULSE.
BUT THERE IS NONE.
VENUS' DRY FLESH BREAKS OFF IN HER HAND LIKE BARK ON A LONG-DEAD TREE.
FOR A SECOND SHE EXPERIENCES REVULSION, BUT HER DESIRE FOR REALITY TO MATCH HER EXPECTATIONS OVERTAKES HER...
VENUS
...AND SHE PUSHES BACK.

HEMOGLOBIN FLOWS IN PLACE OF CHLOROPHYLL. PORES REPLACE STOMATA. COARSE HAIR REPLACES TRICHOMES.

THE FRESH, GREEN SCENT OF TORN PLANT FLESH GIVES WAY TO HOT, HEAVY BREATH.

THE COPSE OF GRASSES, OUTRAGED AND OFFENDED, LASHES AT HER FLESH. THE OLD ASH TREE, BETRAYED, ATTEMPTS TO BATTER HER WITH THE BRANCHES SHE ONCE CLUNG TO WITH SWEATY, PINK HANDS.

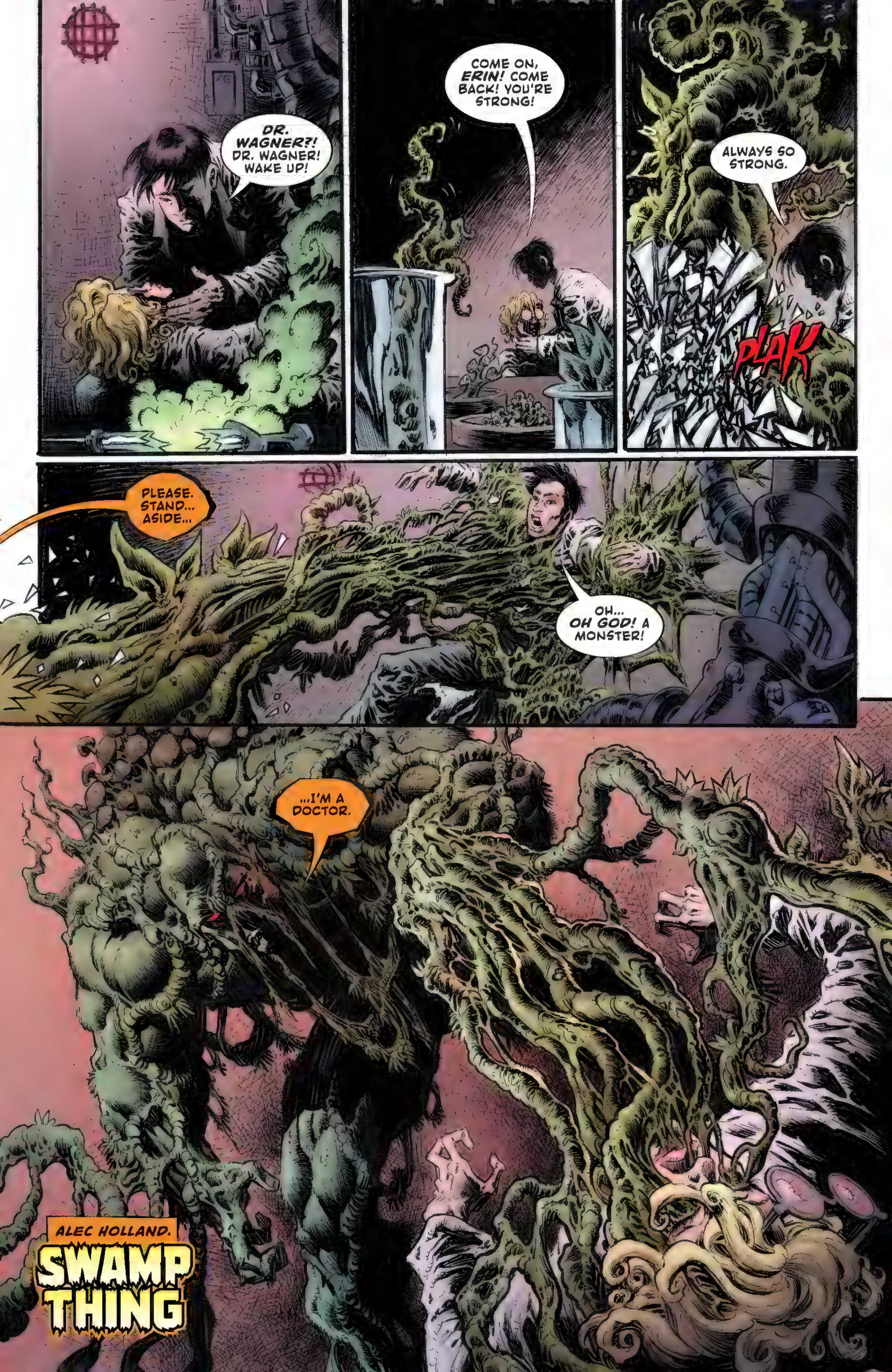
SHE IMAGINES WHAT DUTCH WOULD DO. DUTCH, WHO'D ONCE FOUGHT ITALIANS IN AFRICA, BEFORE RETIRING TO A SMALL CABIN BESIDE THE FOREST.

DUTCH, WHOSE TROWEL TAMED GARDEN WEEDS AND MOLDED TREES TO BE CLIMBED BY GRANDDAUGHTERS.

DUTCH, WHO WAS ALWAYS THERE WHEN SHE WAS CONFUSED AND LOST.

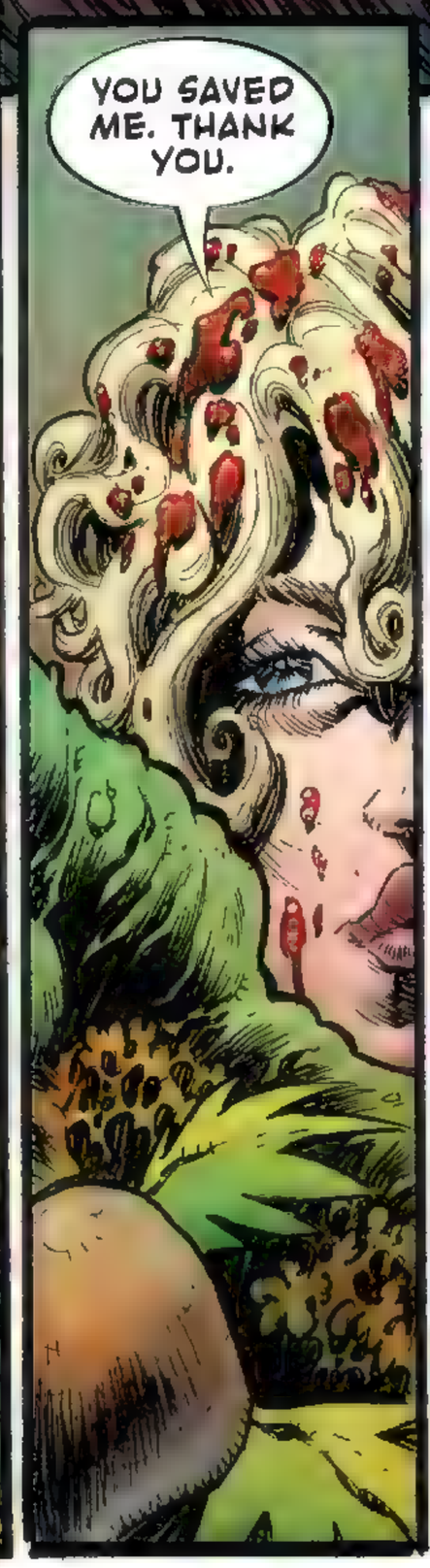
LET'S HAMMER THESE PLANTS FLATTER'N SICILY.

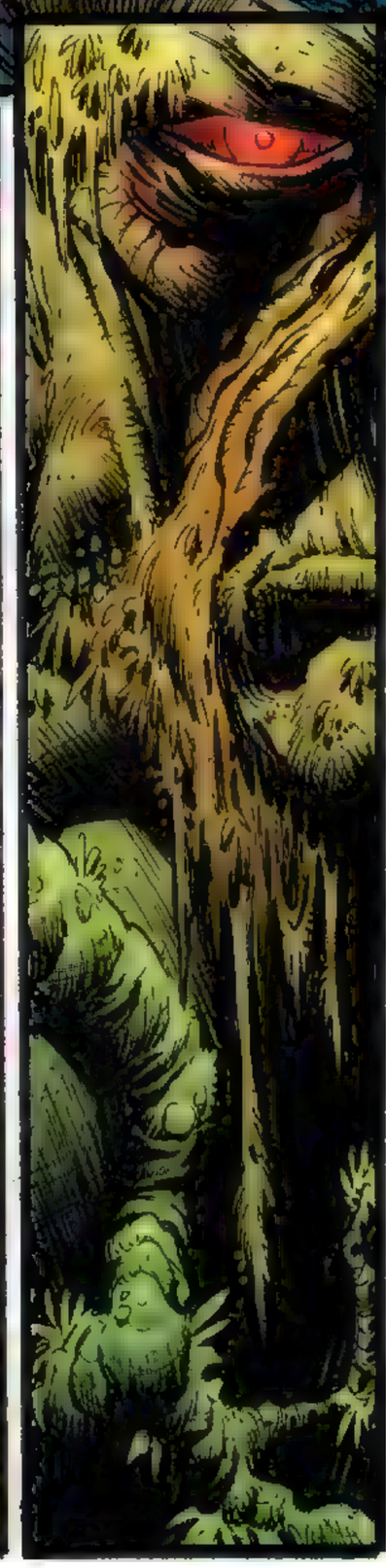
"DR. WAGNER?"


DR. WAGNER?! DR. WAGNER! WAKE UP!
COME ON, ERIN! COME BACK! YOU'RE STRONG!
ALWAYS SO STRONG.
PLAK
PLEASE. STAND... ASIDE...
OH... OH GOD! A MONSTER!
...I'M A DOCTOR.
ALEC HOLLAND.
SWAMP THING

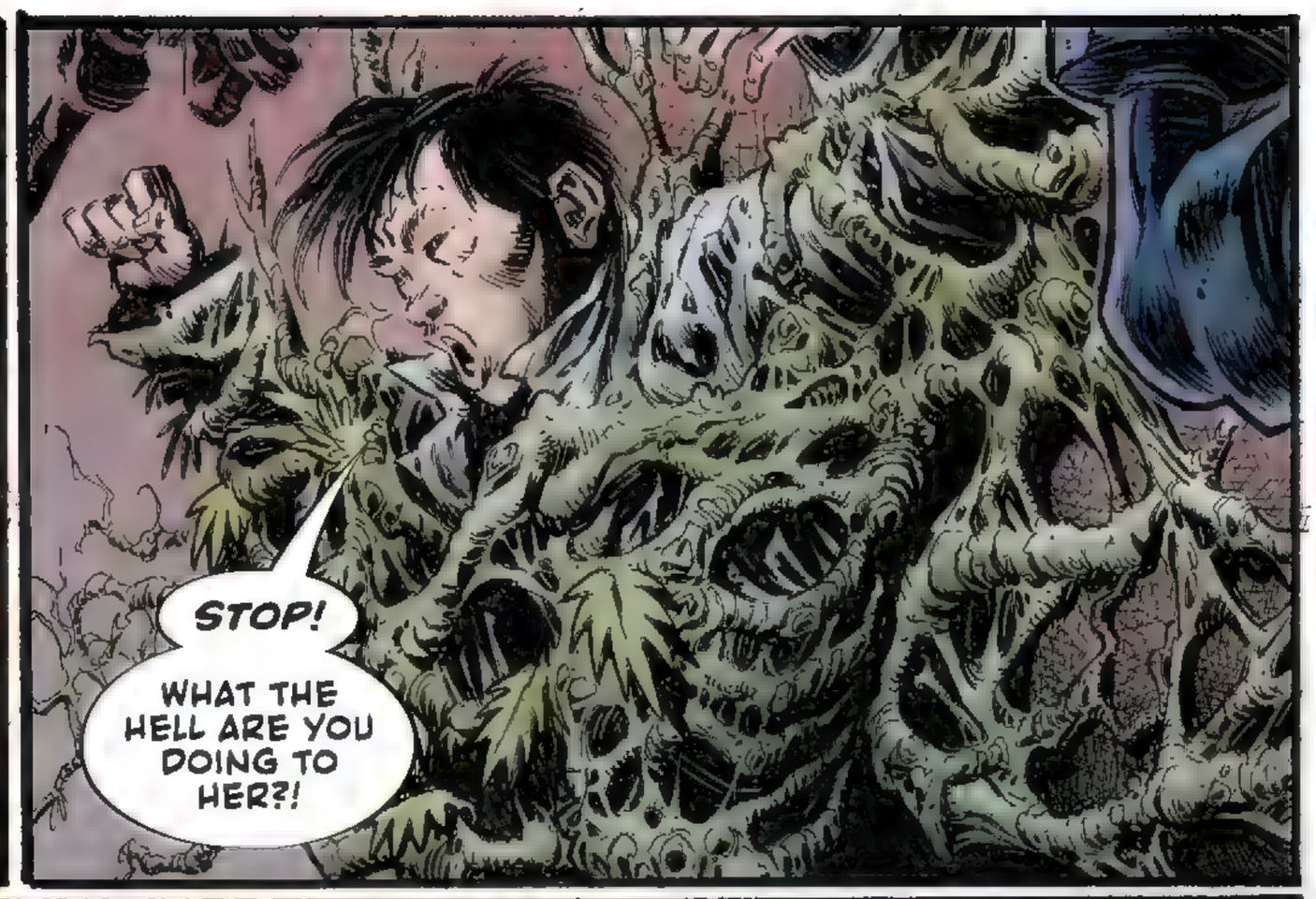
THERE ARE NO CHIRPING BIRDS. NO FLITTING, BUZZING BUGS...
...ONLY THE SOUNDS OF RIPPING, RENDING AND GRUNTING.
THE SMELL OF FRESHLY TORN PLANT FLESH AND HOT, HEAVY BREATH.
I RISE FROM A BUBBLING STREAM OF THICK, WARM BLOOD INTO THE MIDST OF A WAR.

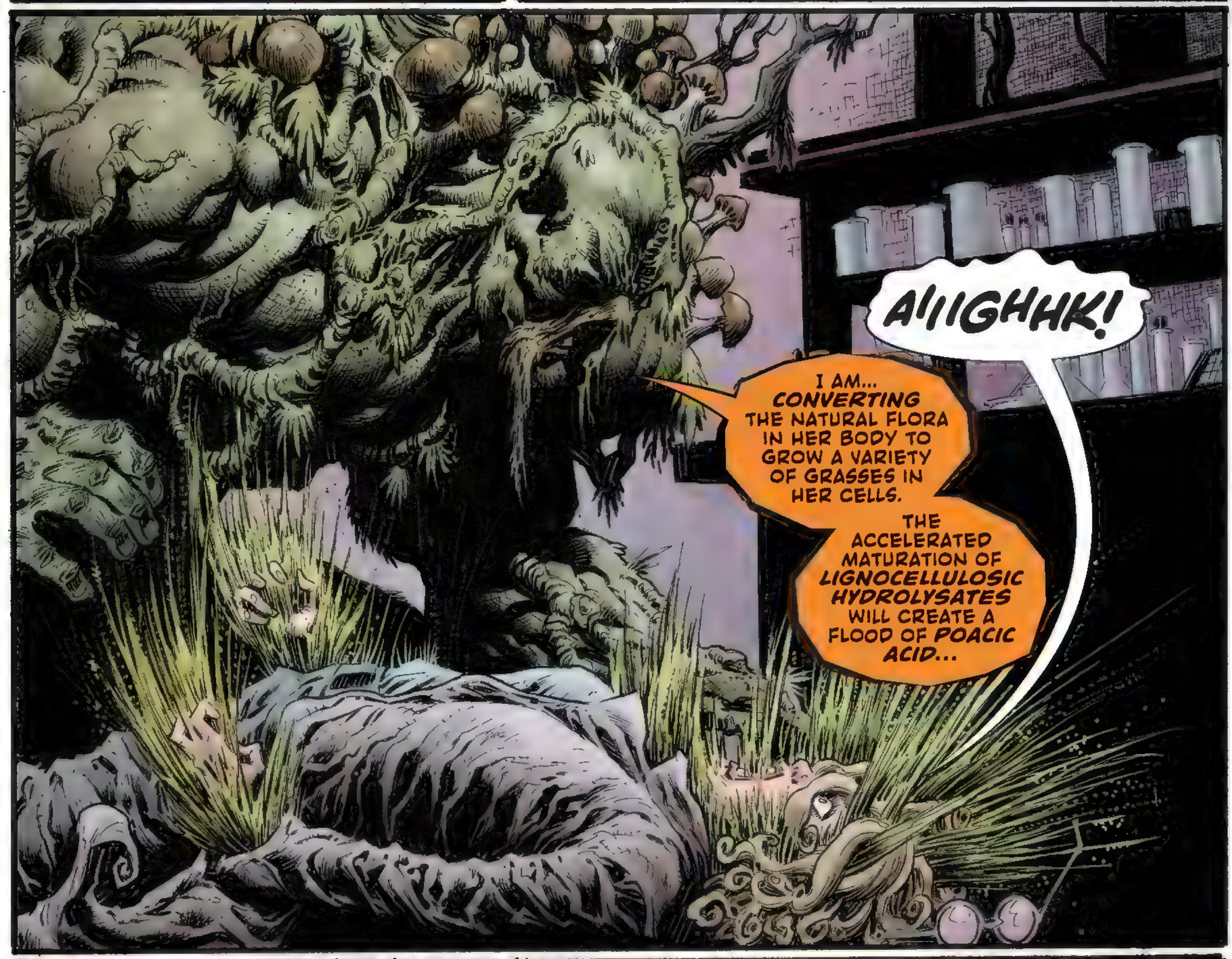
A WAR I MUST END.





AIIGHK!


STOP!
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING TO HER?!


AIIGHHK!
I AM... CONVERTING THE NATURAL FLORA IN HER BODY TO GROW A VARIETY OF GRASSES IN HER CELLS.
THE ACCELERATED MATURATION OF LIGNOCELLULOSIC HYDROLYSATES WILL CREATE A FLOOD OF POACIC ACID...

...A POWERFUL ANTIFUNGAL AGENT...

YOU ARE A ***MOLECULAR BIOLOGIST.*** YOU WERE WORKING ON A ***GENETICALLY MODIFIED YEAST***...THAT WOULD HAVE CONVERTED HUMAN CELLS TO...PLANT FIBER...ABLE TO SUBSIST ON SUNLIGHT ALONE.

FACING LENGTHY TRIAL PERIODS, YOU TESTED YOUR CREATION... UPON YOURSELF.

IT MADE YOU SICK. IT SHOULD HAVE KILLED YOU.

"BUT YOU ARE ***STRONG.*** POSSESSED OF GREAT WILL. YOU FOUGHT WITH BLOOD AND FLESH. WITH CELL AND MARROW. YOU ***SURVIVED.***

"***EVENTUALLY***...YOUR BODY WOULD HAVE CREATED ***ANTIBODIES***...

"...AND THEN...A ***MUTANT VIRUS.***"

DUTCH?! VENUS!

"IT WOULD HAVE SPREAD ACROSS THE EARTH...IT WOULD HAVE TURNED PLANTS INTO ***FLESH.*** TREES INTO ***BONE.***

THE GREEN WOULD HAVE BEEN ***SWALLOWED***... BY ***THE RED.***

WHEN SHE AWAKENS...
KRRRSH
...YOU WILL TELL HER I DID FOR HER WHAT NO ONE DID FOR ME...
...FOR ALEC HOLLAND...
YOU WILL TELL HER...I WAS NOT SAVING HER...
SWAMP THING IN "THE SPREAD"
TIM SEELEY WRITER
KYLE HOTZ ARTIST
FCO PLASCENCIA COLORS
STEVE WANDS LETTERS
I WAS SAVING US...
...FROM HER.
END.

TRICK
OR TREAT!
TRICK OR TREAT!
GIMME SOMETHIN' GOOD TO
EAT, OR ELSE
I'LL THROW YOU DOWN--
OH MY GOD!

I MEAN...
I'M SORRY YOU SCARED ME. I MEAN...
I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
I MEAN...
I THOUGHT YOU, I MEAN...
YOU LOOK LIKE MONSTERS!
AND THERE'S NO SUCH...
...THING?
BUT WHAT IF I'M WRONG?
I MEAN...
I KNOW THAT I AM. UNFORTUNATELY...
I'VE LOOKED A MONSTER IN THE EYE.

"THROUGH A DOORWAY TO HELL.
"OH, YOU DIDN'T KNOW?
"THERE ARE DOORS. CRUSTY GATES, IN PRIMORDIAL PLACES WITH NAMES YOU CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO PRONOUNCE.
"WHEN I LEARNED
"ABOUT THE DOORS, I BECAME OBSESSED WITH THEM.
"I HAD TO SEE WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE.
"I MEAN..."
HOLLOW
BRIAN AZZARELLO Writer
GREG CAPULLO Pencils
JONATHAN GLAPION Inks
FCO PLASCENCIA Colors
TRAVIS LANHAM Letters
DAVE WIELGOSZ Asst. Editor
CHRIS CONROY Editor
JAMIE S. RICH Group Editor

"IT'S *MEAN.* YOU CAN FEEL IT? IN THE WORLD...

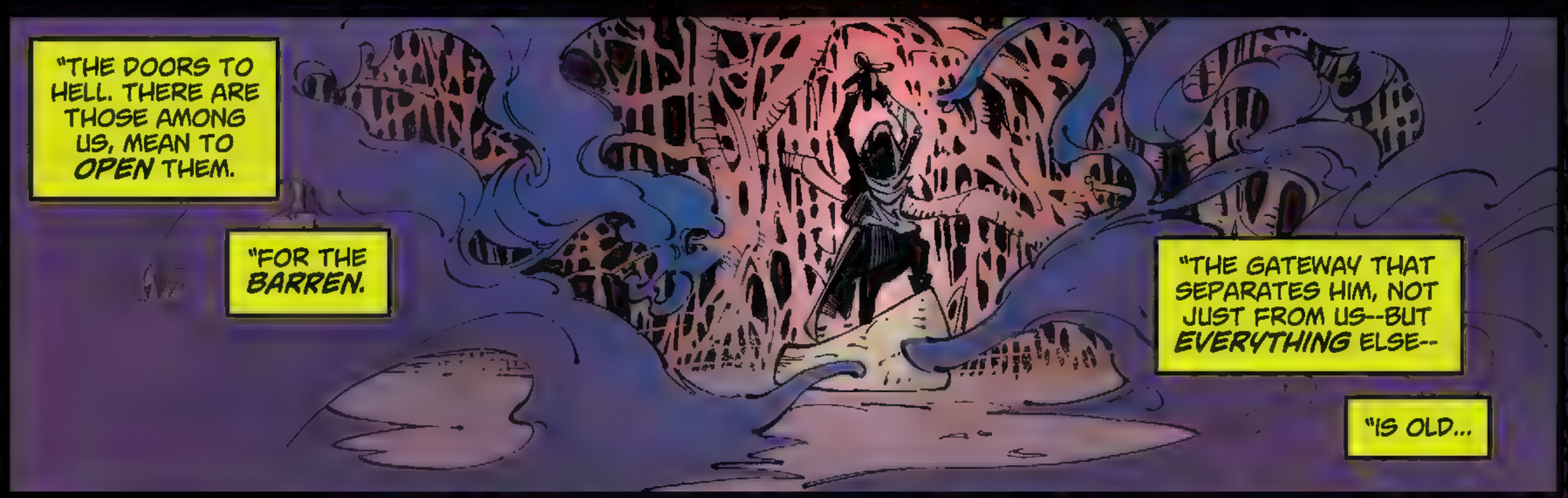
"IN THE AIR. THERE'S NOW A *STINK* OF MEANNESS.

"ONE GOODNESS BELIEVES A WAVE OF A WELL-INTENTIONED HAND IS *ALL* THAT'S NEEDED TO MAKE FOUL UNPLEASANTLY GO AWAY.

"LONG AGO GOOD *LEFT* THIS WORLD, BELIEVING IT HAD *TAUGHT* HUMANITY ENOUGH.

"TO CARRY ON THE *GOOD FIGHT.*

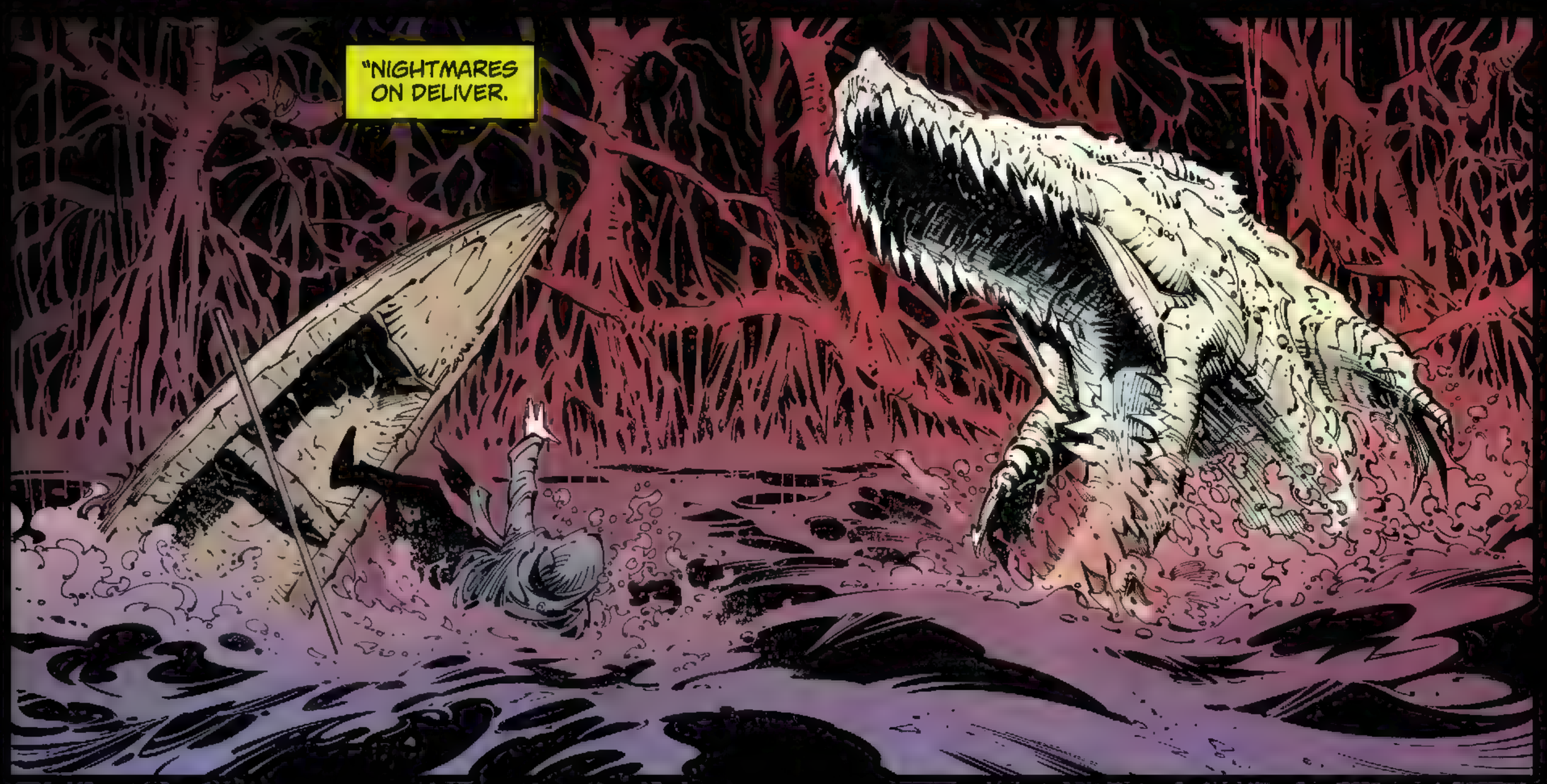
"THAT'S THE *THING* ABOUT GOODNESS. *SO* IMPRESSED WITH ITSELF."

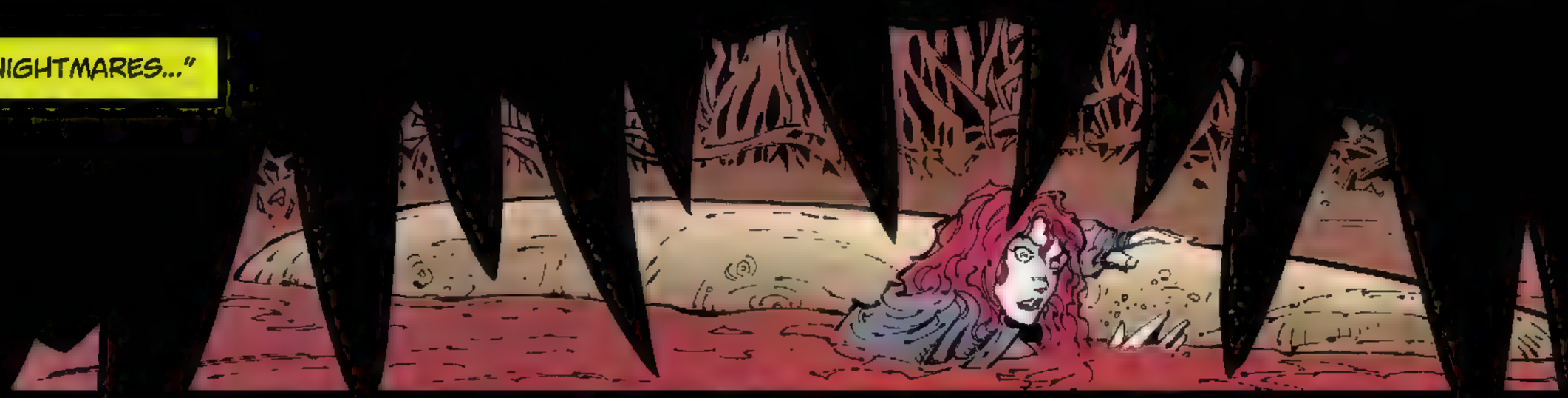

"THE DOORS TO HELL. THERE ARE THOSE AMONG US, MEAN TO *OPEN* THEM.
"FOR THE *BARREN.*
"THE GATEWAY THAT SEPARATES HIM, NOT JUST FROM US--BUT *EVERYTHING* ELSE--
"IS OLD...

"OLD.
"THE CARPENTERS ARE DEAD, THE

"HINGES SOFT.
"CRACK IT OPEN

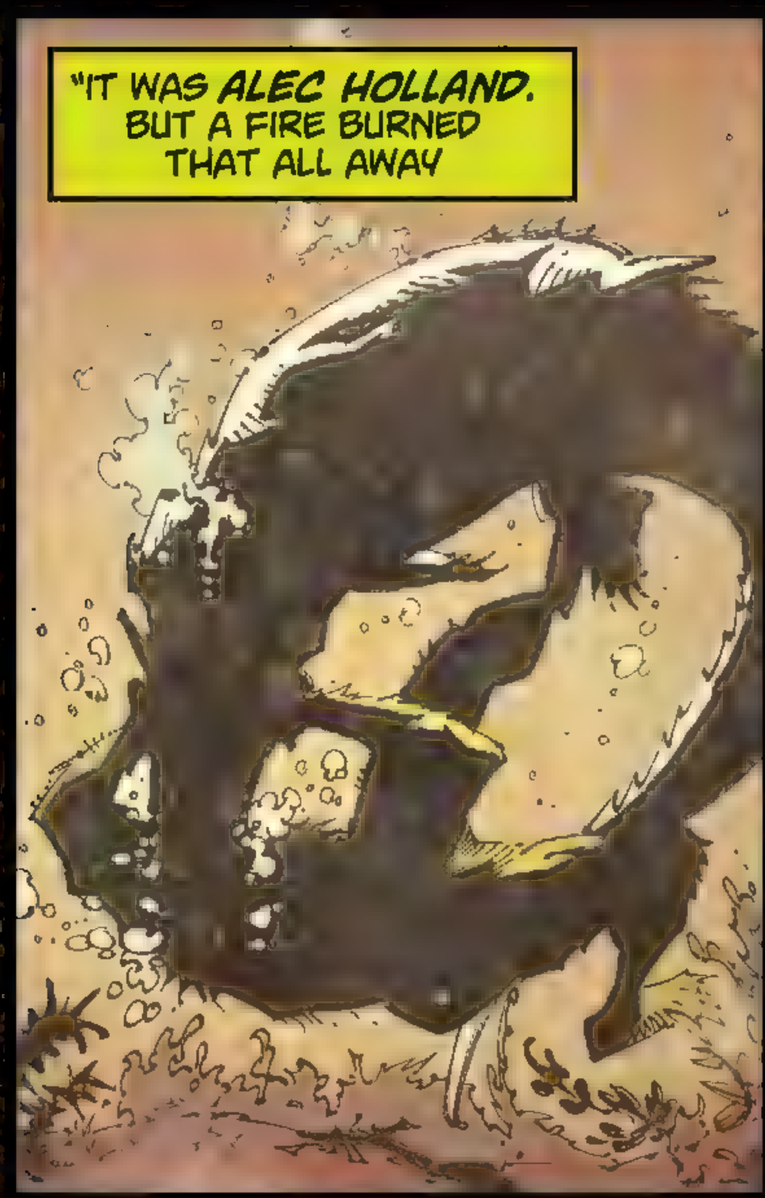
"JUST A SLIVER...


"NIGHTMARES ON DELIVER.


"NIGHTMARES..."

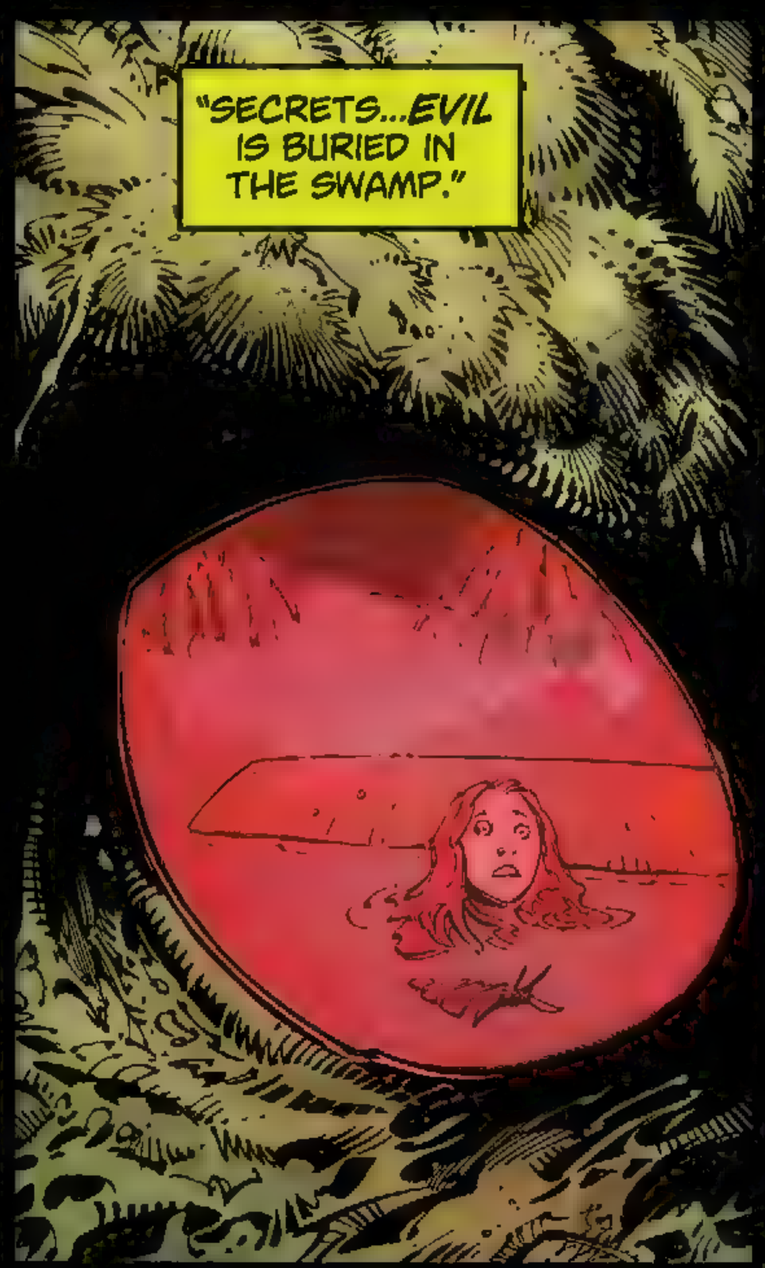
"AND DELIVERANCE FROM.
"SEE
"THERE ARE MONSTERS ON THIS SIDE TOO.
"SOULS SO BROKEN
"GUARDIANS AT THE GATES THAT DENY THEMSELVES THEIR PIECE OF HEAVEN
"TO WAGE WAR ON HELL.

"THIS MONSTER, WAS A *MAN* ONCE.
"HE HAD A *NAME.*


"IT WAS *ALEC HOLLAND.* BUT A FIRE BURNED THAT ALL AWAY

"AND THE BLACK WATER CLAIMED HIM, *RENAMED HIM...*

"SWAMP THING.


"SECRETS...*EVIL* IS BURIED IN THE SWAMP."

WHAT...
YOU'VE SEEN...

CAN'T BE UN--
"*HE* MAKES SURE IT'S BURIED *DEEP* ENOUGH."

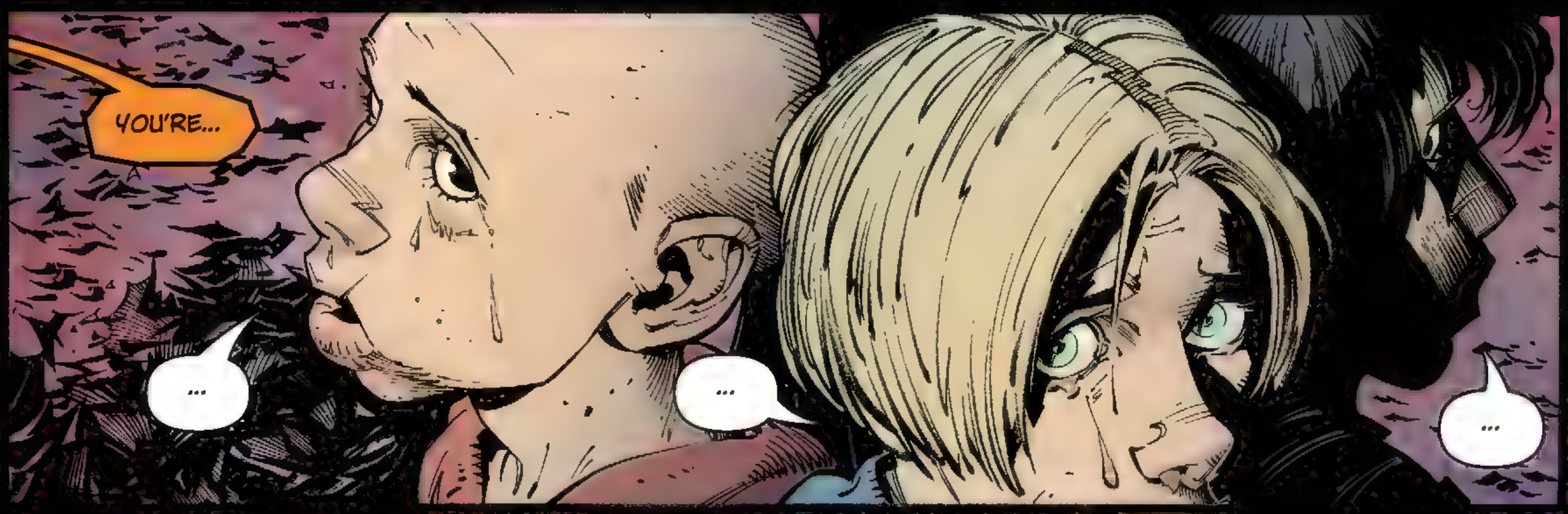
ANYWAY, THAT'S MY STORY. I SAW A MONSTER AND IT COST ME AN EYE.
BUT NOT ALL MONSTERS ARE THE SAME, I GUESS IS THE MORAL.
WHIMPER

OH...
APPARENTLY YOU THREE DON'T HAVE ANY.
OUT HERE IN THE WOODS, AFRAID OF NOTHING. WELL, LET ME TELL YOU, LITTLE NAUGHTIES...
PLEASE...

THERE ARE THINGS YOU SHOULD BE AFRAID OF...

CHILDREN?
?
CRAAASH
THERE IS NO... GREATER EVIL...
THAN EVIL MASQUERADING... AS CHILDREN.
KI'TAH KCRALL BI'TAL, SWA'THA

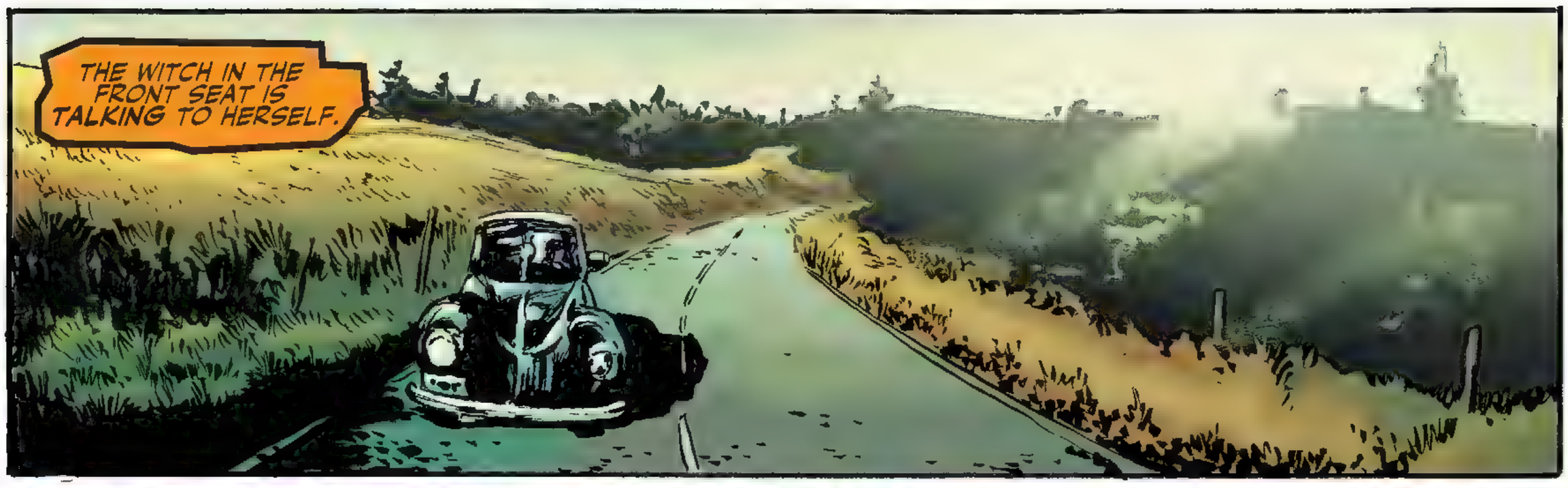
BI'TAL!
BI'TAL!
NO...
NO BI'TAL.
THOUGH ON HALLOWEEN...
SMASH
THE GATES...PUSH OPEN...
I WON'T LET YOU...STAY ON THIS SIDE. TONIGHT...
OR ANY...OTHER NIGHT.

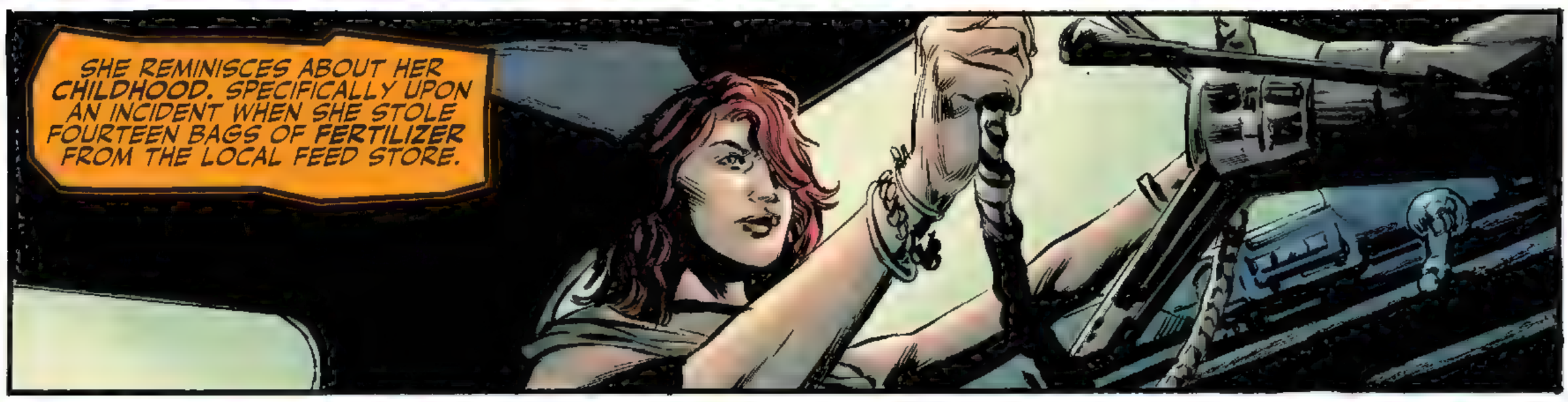

YOU'RE...
...
...
...

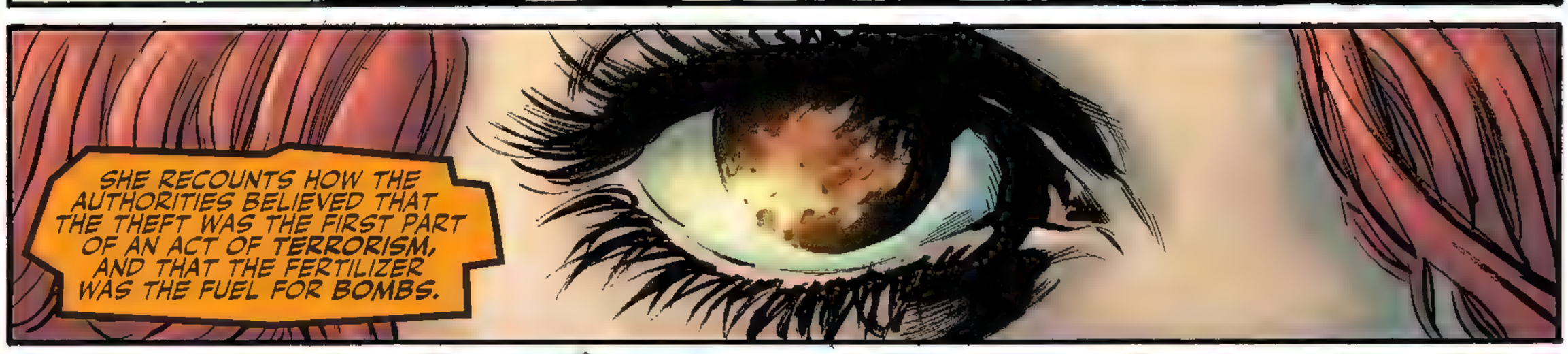
SAFE. GO... DON'T...
COME BACK.
LORD NEVER-BARREN...

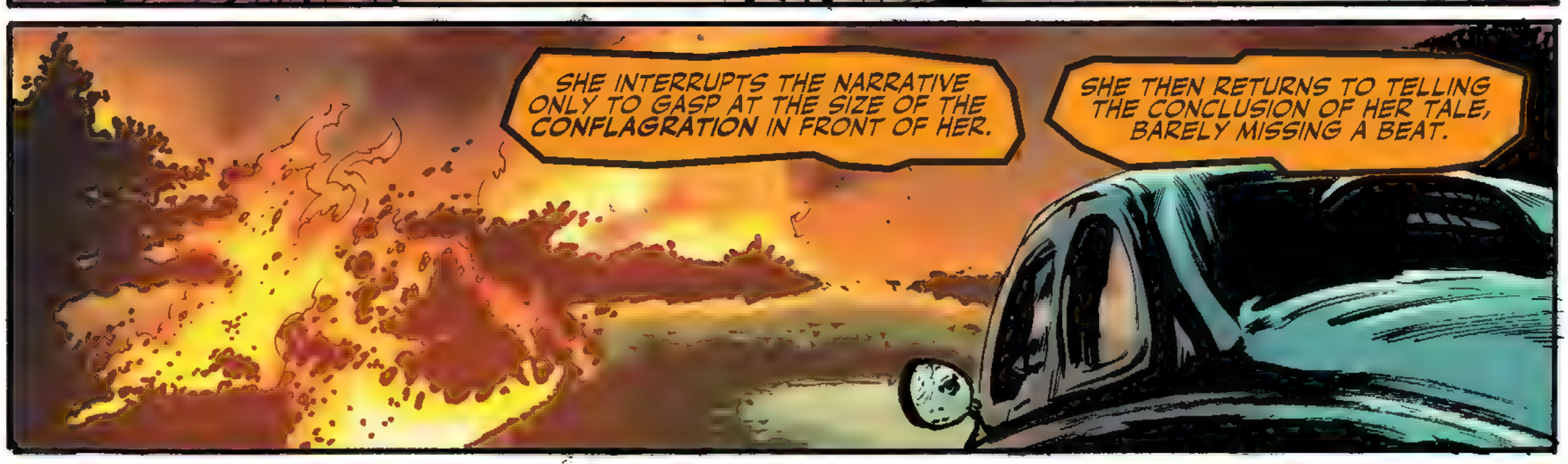
YOUR MESSAGE, I QUESTION. THEY RUN IN FEAR, NOT TO SPREAD YOUR WORD.
TWIGLET...
LONG TIME PEOPLE...
HAVEN'T BEEN SCARED...
NO FEAR, MADE THEM...

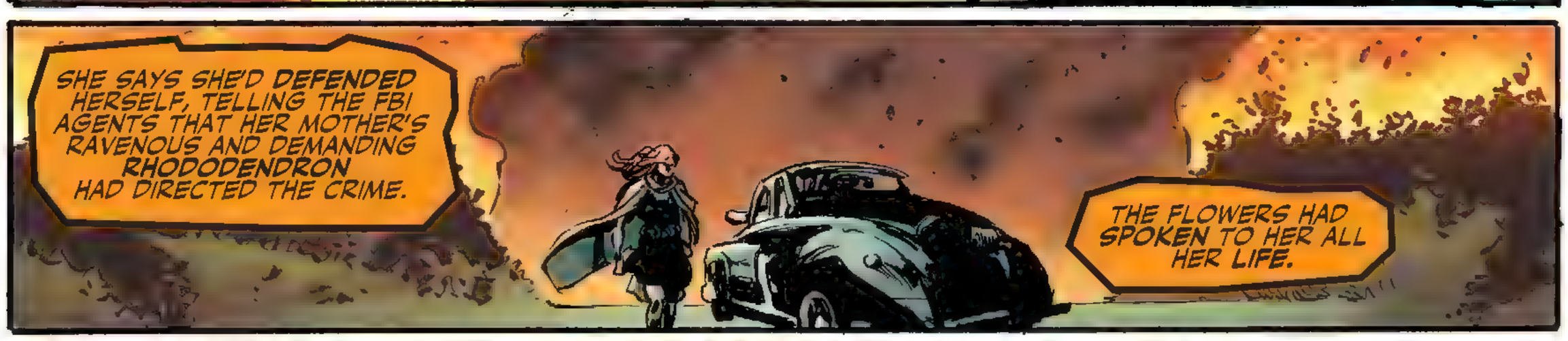
BLIND?
DUMB...
TOO DUMB TO...BE AFRAID.
STILL...
AIR...
MEANNESS.
THE BARREN...IS COMING.
PEOPLE DON'T...FEAR HIM.
TO DEFEAT HIM...
PEOPLE... MUST FEAR ME.
END?


THE WITCH IN THE FRONT SEAT IS TALKING TO HERSELF.


SHE REMINISCES ABOUT HER CHILDHOOD. SPECIFICALLY UPON AN INCIDENT WHEN SHE STOLE FOURTEEN BAGS OF FERTILIZER FROM THE LOCAL FEED STORE.


SHE RECOUNTS HOW THE AUTHORITIES BELIEVED THAT THE THEFT WAS THE FIRST PART OF AN ACT OF TERRORISM, AND THAT THE FERTILIZER WAS THE FUEL FOR BOMBS.


SHE INTERRUPTS THE NARRATIVE ONLY TO GASP AT THE SIZE OF THE CONFLAGRATION IN FRONT OF HER.
SHE THEN RETURNS TO TELLING THE CONCLUSION OF HER TALE, BARELY MISSING A BEAT.


SHE SAYS SHE'D DEFENDED HERSELF, TELLING THE FBI AGENTS THAT HER MOTHER'S RAVENOUS AND DEMANDING RHODODENDRON HAD DIRECTED THE CRIME.
THE FLOWERS HAD SPOKEN TO HER ALL HER LIFE.

THAT MISTAKE, SHE SAYS, LEADS HER TO UNDERSTAND WHY THE MAN WE'RE HUNTING WOULD WANT TO ESCAPE THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD HE WAS HELD IN UNTIL VERY RECENTLY.
END OF THE LINE, BIG GUY.
I HEARD YOU...TALKING TO YOURSELF, BRIAR.

THE SWAMP THING IN DESERT OF ASH

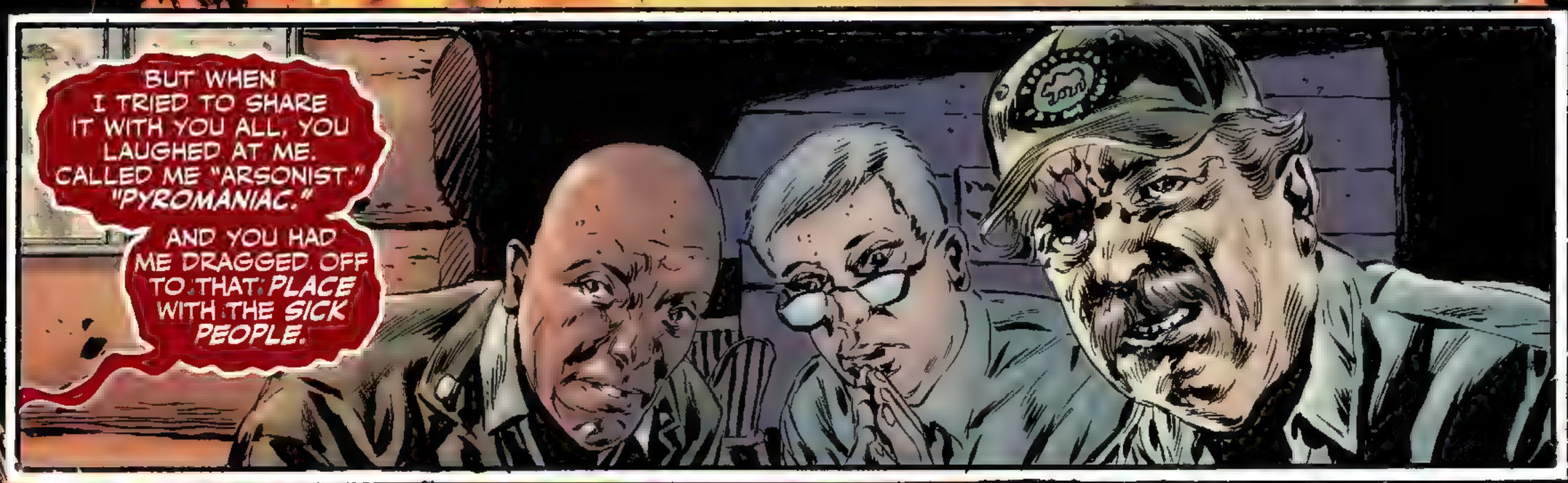
TIM SEELEY WRITER
MIKE PERKINS ARTIST
JORDAN BOYD COLORS
DAVE SHARPE LETTERS

DAVE WIELGOSZ ASST. EDITOR
CHRIS CONROY, EDITOR
JAMIE S. RICH GROUP EDITOR

...RISING FROM THE SHADOWS OF THE NEXT.

THE FIRE SPOKE TO ME.

BEAUTIFUL, SENSUOUS WORDS. DANCING POETRY.



IT WAS THERE THAT IT SPOKE TO ME AGAIN. AND THIS TIME IT GAVE ME MORE THAN WORDS.

IT GAVE ME LOVE. IT GAVE ME FREEDOM.

THROOM
HNG. GREEN.
ATTEND... TO THE RANGERS. THE CHAR MAN IS... MINE.
SO THE FOREST SPEAKS AS WELL.
BUT MY WORDS WON'T BE DROWNED OUT AGAIN. NOT BY LAUGHTER. NOT BY WHITE PILLS AND PADDED WALLS.
RAAAAGGH!
AND NOT BY THE WHISPERS OF LEAVES.
THRROOM

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS *LIKE* IN THE INSTITUTION. HOW AGONIZINGLY *LONELY* IT WAS.

THEY LOCKED ME IN A ROOM FAR FROM LAMPS AND OVENS. SERVED MY FOOD UNCOOKED AND LEFT ME IN DARKNESS, TO BREATHE AIR THAT WAS DAMP AND COLD.
TSSSSSSSSS
I WAS...
SUFFOCATING.
NO.
NOW THAT I'VE BEEN EMBRACED IN THE ARMS OF MY LOVER, I WON'T BE CAGED EVER AGAIN!
I WON'T BE CONTAINED!
HNH.
MOISTURE IS SAPPED FROM MY EXTENDED LIMBS, EVAPORATING INTO THE ASH-FILLED AIR.
THE OUTER LAYERS OF MY BODY BLACKEN AND CURL.

HOT ACRID AIR ASSAULTS ME, AND I SMELL MYSELF BURNING...
NO.
...AGAIN.
LIKE WHEN I WAS A MAN. A SCIENTIST NAMED ALEC HOLLAND.
NO.
I HAVE ANGERED A MOB BOSS BY NOT SHARING MY CHEMICAL FORMULAS.
HE HAS PLANTED A BOMB BENEATH MY DESK.
I GRAB FOR IT TOO LATE.
I AM BURNING. IT IS AGONY.
YES! SHED YOUR GREEN SKIN, AND EMBRACE THE BLACK INSIDE!
I AM BURNING, AND I KNOW MY ONLY RELEASE IS DEATH.

NHH! THE LOG'S TOO HEAVY! IT WON'T BUDGE!
OKAY. WELL, WE LEAVE WITHOUT HIM, THEN.
HNGH...

WHAT? IT'S SIMPLE MATH. I SAVE TWO, BUT LOSE ONE. THAT'S STILL A WIN IN MY BOOK.
LOOK, I'M NOT SOME SUPERHERO OR SOMETHING, OKAY? I'M JUST A TOURIST, LOOKING FOR SOME GOOD GLIMPSES INTO THE OTHER SIDE...

OW!
HELLO THERE, LITTLE EMBER. YOU WANTED MY ATTENTION?
SSSSS

AH.
YEAH. I... I SEE.

I SEE.

THERE IS NOTHING LEFT OF THE MAN I WAS.
ALEC HOLLAND IS DEAD AND GONE FOREVER.
YES, MY LOVE. I HEAR YOUR SONG. I'LL FIND A WAY TO MAKE THE NOTHING BURN.
BUT FIRST, THE ONES WHO SEPARATED US.
POP
FIRST, EVERYONE--
WHAT--? WHERE ARE YOU--?
GHRK.
ALEC HOLLAND IS DEAD AND GONE FOREVER. I HAVE HIS MEMORIES. HIS PAIN. HIS TERRIBLE FEAR OF THE FLAMES THAT KILLED HIM.

BUT I AM NOT ALEC HOLLAND, AND FLAME CANNOT KILL ME.
MY NEW FLESH BREATHES OUT A WAVE OF CARBON DIOXIDE THAT CHOKES FLAME.
I HAVE REGROWN AS A SEQUOIA TREE, WHOSE SEEDS OPEN IN HEAT. FIRE IS KEY TO MY REBIRTH.
KRAKOOM
I AM THE SWAMP THING.
BRIAR...

BRIAR!

HEY. WE'RE PLAYING OUIJA. LEMME FIND OUT THE NAME OF MARK'S FIRST KID HERE AND WE CAN GET GOING.

BROCK? WHO'S NAMED "BROCK" ANYMORE?

BUT...

THERE'S A GAGGLE OF FIREFIGHTERS HEADED THIS WAY, SO UNLESS YOU FEEL INCLINED TO DO ANYTHING MORE THAN FIGHT MONSTERS, LET'S LEAVE IT TO THE PROS.

HOW?

THE FLAMES... THEY DO NOT... *TOUCH* YOU. OR THE OTHERS.

OH, THAT? WELL, SEE, *THEY* DECIDED THAT MAYBE THEIR CURRENT AVATAR, "CHAR MAN" OR WHATEVER YOU CALLED HIM, WASN'T THE *BEST* HARBINGER ON THE MARKET.

LITTLE TOO *DAMAGED.*

WHO DECIDED?

OH, Y'KNOW, JUST THE *ELEMENTAL FORCES OF FIRE.*

THEY CAN *FEEL* IT. A BREACH IN EVERY-THING.

NOTHING IS COMING. AND YOU CAN'T BURN NOTHING.

THE BARREN.

THEY'RE AFRAID. LIKE *BI'TAL.*

YEP. SO, I MADE THEM A DEAL. DON'T TOUCH ME OR ANYONE AROUND ME, AND MY GOOD FRIEND "LORD NEVER-BARREN"--
(THAT'S WHAT I'M CALLING YOU. IT'S GOOD P.R.)
--WILL STOP THE NOTHING. IN FACT, HE'LL STUFF IT RIGHT BACK THROUGH THE DOOR IT CAME IN THROUGH.
I SEE.
OH, AND I MAY HAVE SAID THAT IF WE DON'T SUCCEED, THEY COULD ROAST US ALIVE.
FOR ETERNITY.
NEXT: THE SLASHER IN THE SWAMP!

BLADES UP!
EXIT THE WATER AND SET UP CAMP FOR THE NIGHT! CAMPFIRE SING-ALONG IN ONE HOUR!
BOGUE CHITTO RIVER, LOUISIANA.
SING-ALONG? SERIOUSLY? WHAT AM I, SEVEN?
RIGHT? CAMPFIRES ARE FOR TELLING CREEP STORIES THAT KEEP YOU UP ALL NIGHT, AND JUMPING AT EVERY SOUND.
THAT'S WHAT I'M SAYING. AND TRUST ME, KIMBERLY, I HAVE A BEAST OF A STORY!
YEAH? I'M CONFIDENT THAT YOURS HAS GOT NOTHIN' ON MINE.
WELL, I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO EMBARRASS YOURSELF. MAYBE YOU SHOULD TRY IT OUT ON ME FIRST.
ALL RIGHT, RYAN. GET READY TO CHANGE YOUR SHORTS, WHEN YOU HEAR...
...THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING!

BECAUSE ALEC GETS VISITED BY SOME THUGS FROM THE LOCAL MOB. THEIR BOSS WANTS IN ON HIS OPERATION, OR ELSE.

HOLLAND, HE TELLS THEM HE DOESN'T DEAL WITH SCUM.

AND SO HE COMES BACK LATER TO FIND HIS LAB TRASHED, AND A FIREBOMB PLANTED UNDER HIS DESK.

THEY SAY IT WENT OFF INCHES FROM HIS FACE.

THE IMPACT SHATTERED THE TEST TUBES AND COVERED HIM IN EVERY KIND OF CHEMICAL IN HIS LAB.

EVERY BIT OF HIM IS BURNING. HE'S WISHING HE WAS DEAD, BUT HIS INSTINCT CARRIES HIM OUT THE DOOR TOWARDS THE DARK WATER.

AND HE WENT UNDER AS A BURNING MASS OF SCREAMING AGONY.

SOME SAY HIS FORMULA **SAVED** HIM FROM CERTAIN DEATH, **REPLACING** FLESH AND BONE WITH **MOSS** AND **WOOD** AND **ALGAE.**

BUT **OTHERS** SAY THE CHEMICALS **ACTIVATED** THE PLANTS AT THE BOTTOM OF THAT POOL, AND WHAT WALKED OUT IS JUST A WAILING, SHAMBLING PILE OF **WEEDS...**

...TRYING TO GET ***REVENGE*** FOR THE MAN IT THINKS IT IS.

THAT'S NOT BAD. KINDA GOT THAT ***BODY-HORROR*** THING GOING ON, WHICH I LIKE.

BUT I CAN ***TOP*** THAT. MINE'S EVEN GOT ***LOCAL*** INTEREST. SEE, THERE WAS THIS...

OH. YEAH. ***THAT.***

NO, DON'T COVER IT UP. I ***WANT*** TO SEE IT.

IT'S BEAUTIFUL IN ITS WAY. UNIQUE. A ***BADGE.***

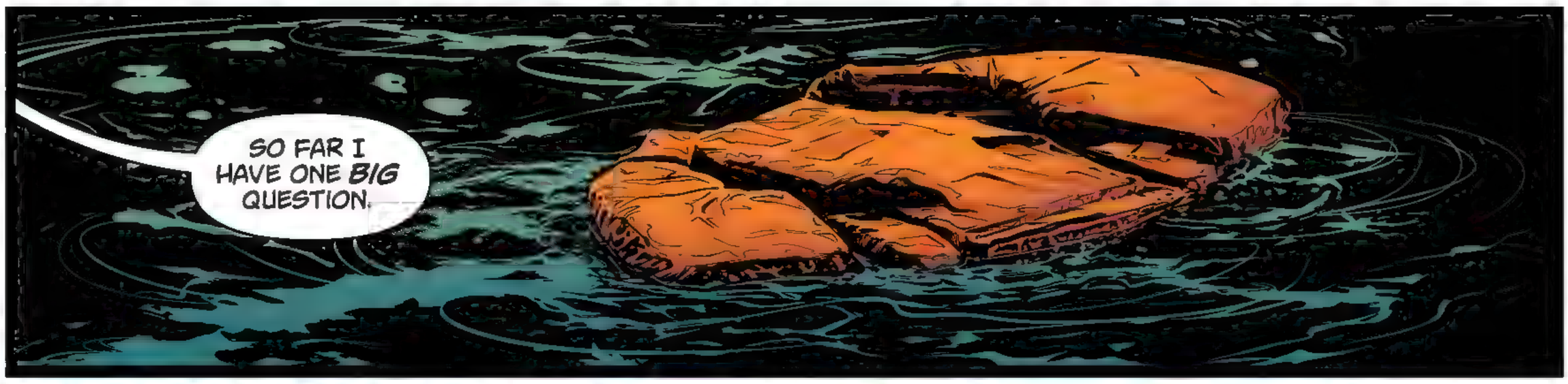
I SMELL DEATH ON TINY WHITE WINGS.

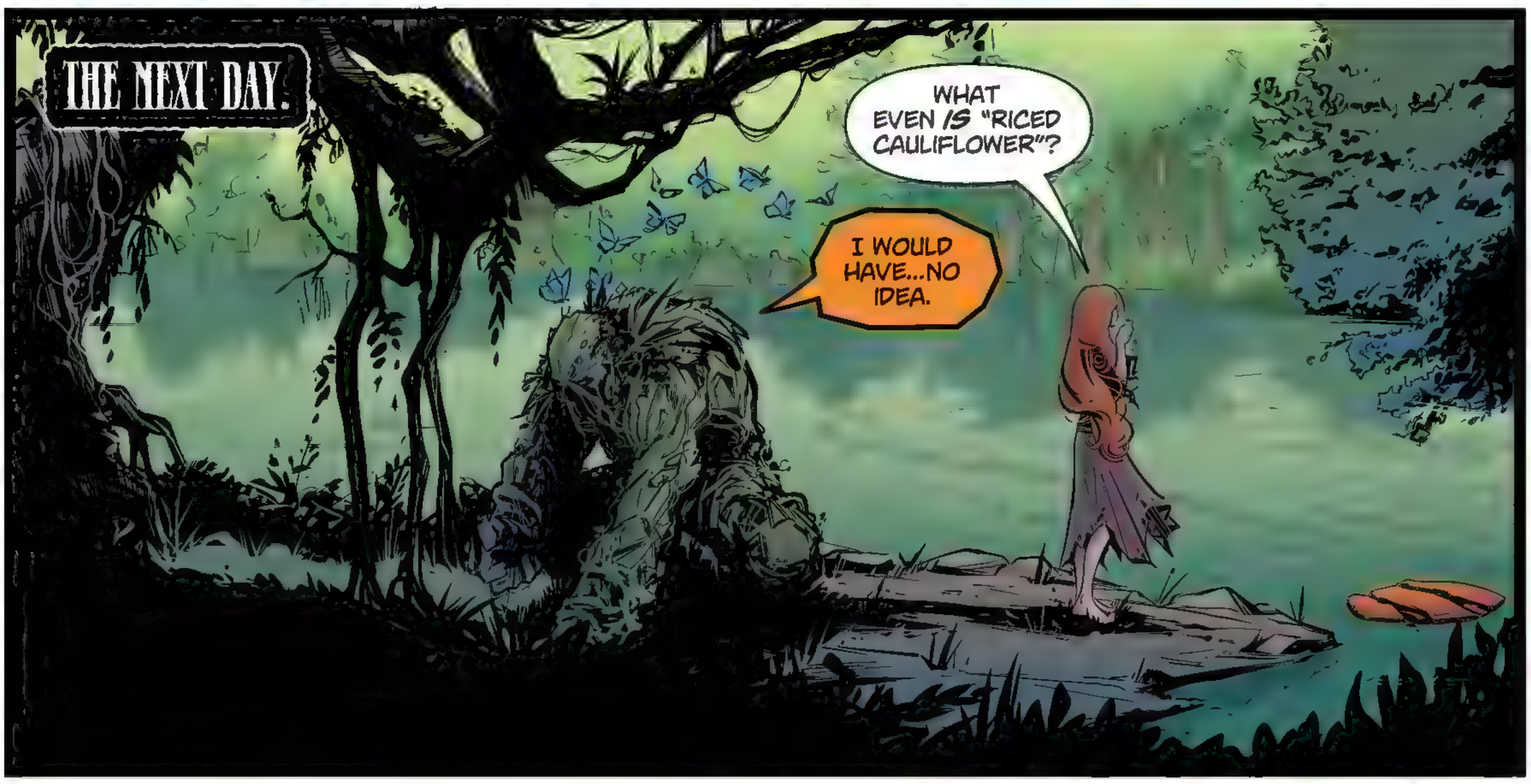
I SMELL SALVATION.

I SMELL TOMORROW. SWEET, RED TOMORROW.

BOG OF BLOOD part one

TIM SEELEY writer | JOËLLE JONES artist | TRISH MULVIHILL colors | TRAVIS LANHAM letters | DAVE WIELGOSZ asst. editor | CHRIS CONROY editor | JAMIE S. RICH group editor


SO FAR I HAVE ONE BIG QUESTION.


THE NEXT DAY.
WHAT EVEN IS "RICED CAULIFLOWER"?
I WOULD HAVE...NO IDEA.

WELL, YOU TALK TO PLANTS. CAN YOU ASK IT?
I AM ENGAGED...IN CONVERSATION... WITH THE GRASS, TWIGLET.
Riced Cauliflower

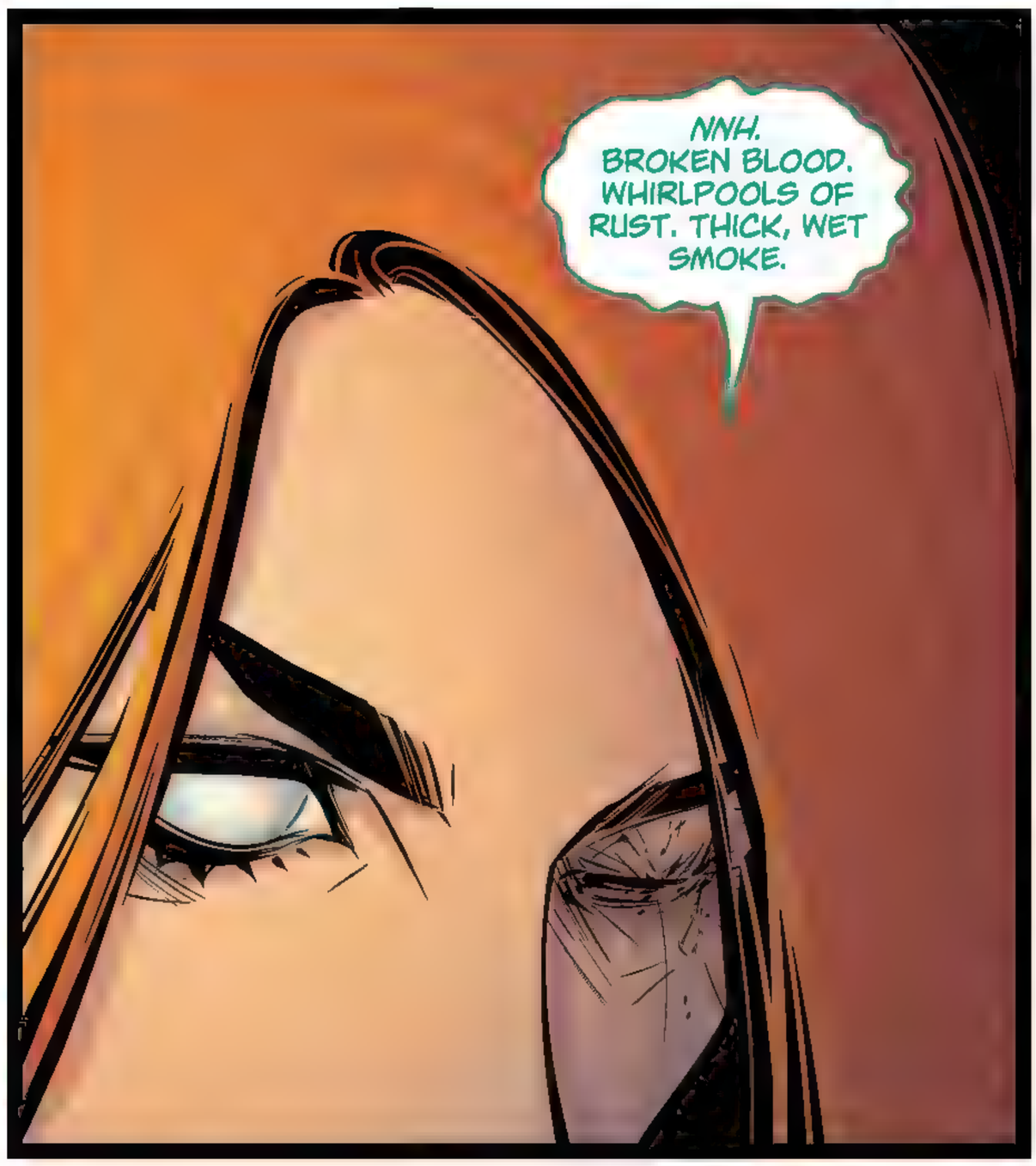
"TWIGLET." CAN YOU NOT CALL ME THAT? IT'S BRIAR. JUST BRIAR.
Riced Cauliflower

I'VE SEEN THINGS SO HORRIFIC, I HAD TO TAKE OUT MY OWN EYEBALL WITH A HOT SPOON.
HAVE SOME RESPECT.

I MEAN, IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE FACT THAT MY HOLLOW EYE FILLS MY DREAMS WITH VISIONS OF THE COMING OF THE BARREN, WE WOULDN'T EVEN BE HERE.
HM. YES.

THIS BLADE HAS OFFERED... ITSELF AS WITNESS. ON IT...A FLUID. ITS BASE COMPONENTS... SESAME OIL, POLYSACCHARIDE SUGARS, RESIN OF CONIFERS AND... SOMETHING ELSE...
GIVE.

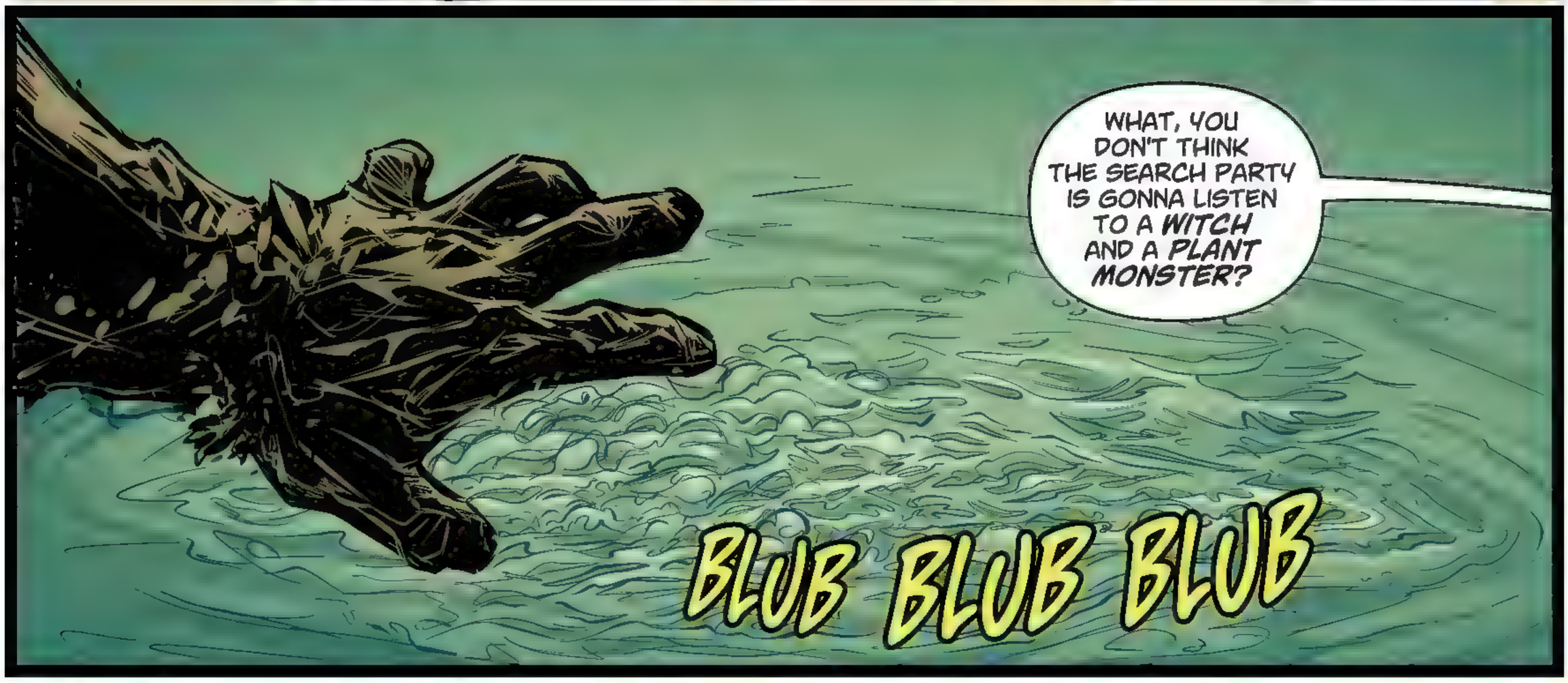
LET'S SEE WHAT THE OL' WITCH-EYE CAN--
--AGHNN!
BRIAR! WHAT DO YOU SEE?


NNH. BROKEN BLOOD. WHIRLPOOLS OF RUST. THICK, WET SMOKE.

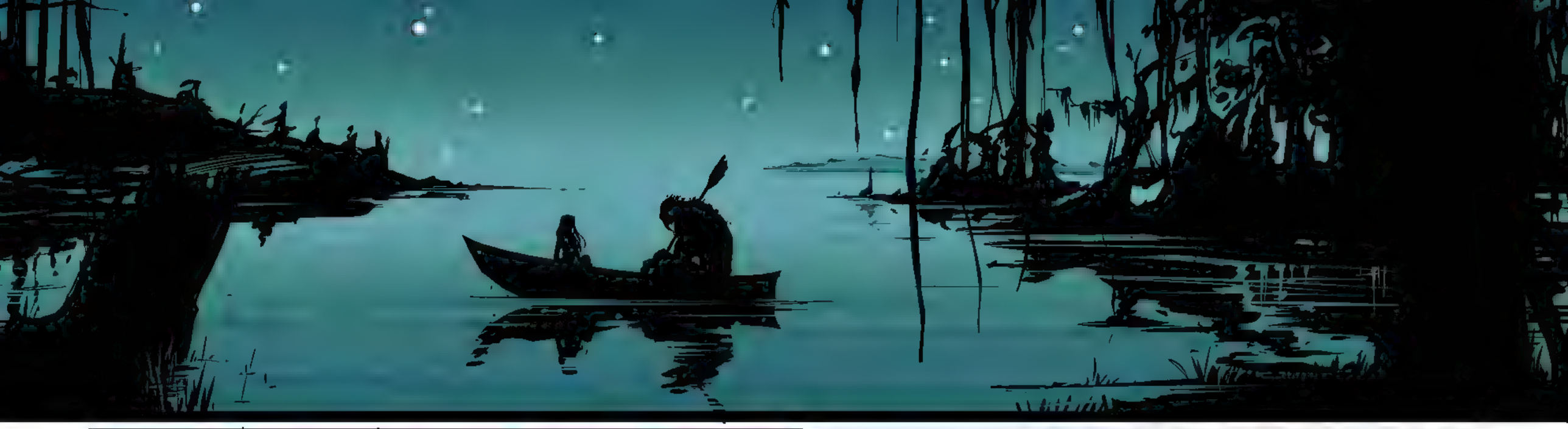
THAT'S IT... THE DREAM...
BLOOD FROM THE WOUND IN THE WORLD.

I KNEW IT. THE BARREN. IT'S GETTING STRONGER. SOMEHOW, ITS COMING IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE MISSING COLLEGE KIDS.
ARRF ARRF AAOOOO

YES...BUT THE POLICE AND THEIR...HOUND DOGS WILL NOT... SEE IT THAT WAY...


WHAT, YOU DON'T THINK THE SEARCH PARTY IS GONNA LISTEN TO A WITCH AND A PLANT MONSTER?
BLUB BLUB BLUB

YEAH. ME NEITHER.
ALL ABOARD THE MUCKTOWN EXPRESS.
SPLOOSH

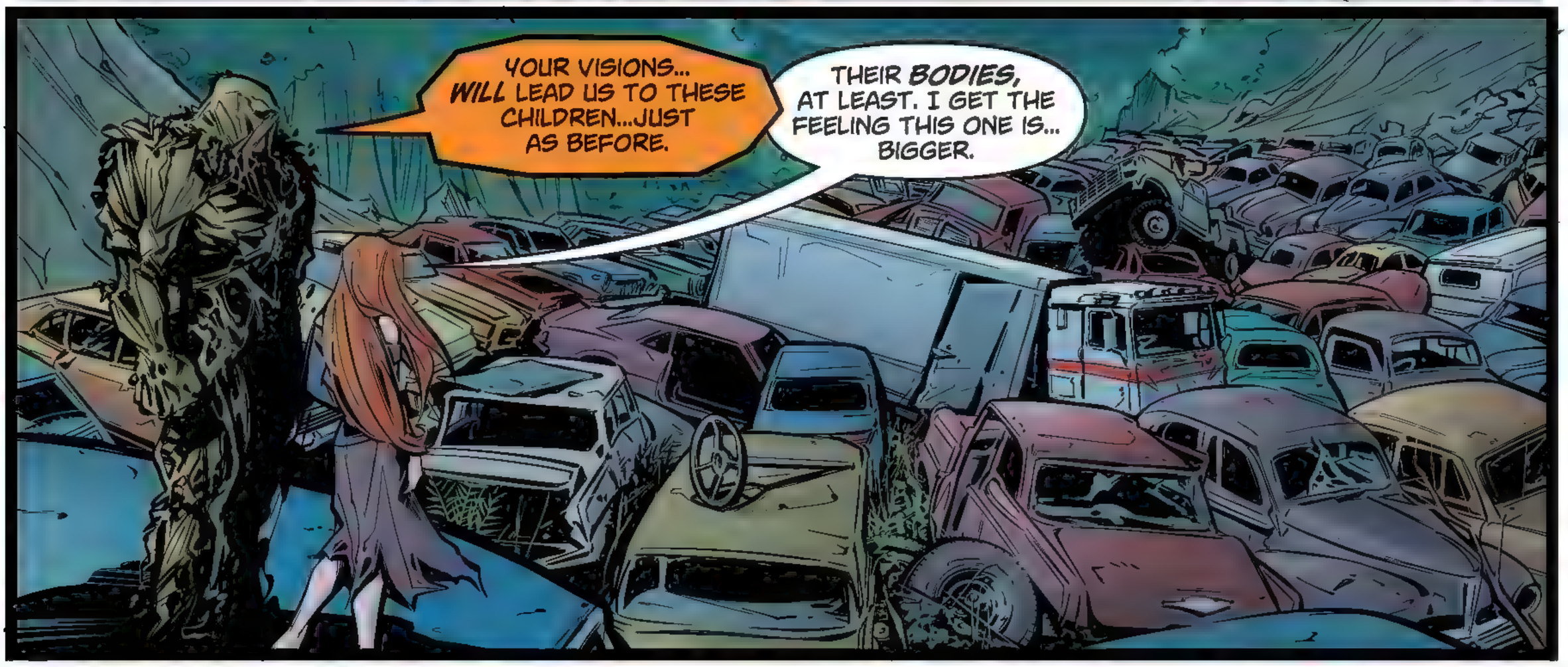


THE DREAM...BRIAR, YOU HAVEN'T SAID...MUCH OF THE VISION'S... CONTENTS.
EH, YOU KNOW. THE USUAL. A BARRAGE OF IMAGES AND SOUNDS. ENOUGH TO DISCERN A LOCATION AND A CRIME. TERRIFIED SCREAMS AND BLOODY PAIN.

AND THEN THE SCRATCHING. THE SHREDDING. THE RIP IN EVERYTHING.
THEN, THE DISRUPTION. NOTHING STARING BACK. NOTHING EXISTS AT ALL.
BECAUSE OF THE BARREN. THE BARREN COMES.

THERE. MORE BLOOD.
WE GO THAT WAY.

WHIRLPOOLS OF RUST.


YOUR VISIONS... *WILL* LEAD US TO THESE CHILDREN...JUST AS BEFORE.
THEIR *BODIES,* AT LEAST. I GET THE FEELING THIS ONE IS... BIGGER.

IT IS OF NO CONSEQUENCE... *ALL* WHO SERVE THE BARREN WILL FALL.
Y'KNOW...I'VE BEEN *THINKING* ABOUT THAT, EVER SINCE WE RAN INTO *BLACK BI'TAL* ON HALLOWEEN.

WHAT IF ALL OF THESE ELEMENTAL BEINGS AREN'T *SERVING* THE BARREN?
WHAT IF THEY'RE *RUNNING* FROM IT?

SHRAAK
AAAHH!

BRIAR!

WHOEVER HAS TAKEN HER... WHATEVER YOU ARE...
I WILL FIND YOU! I WILL--

SILENCE
UNGH!

YOU ARE NOT WELCOME IN THIS SACRED PLACE.

SPLUNCH
UNWORTHY OF MY SWEET RED TOMORROW.

YOU HAVE NOTHING MS. RAVENMOCKER NEEDS.
RRRIPP

HRR?

BKLOOSH

AHHHHH!
LILY POLLEN. KNOWN TO CAUSE... NAUSEA, BURNING MUCOUS MEMBRANES... TEMPORARY PARALYSIS.

NOW I HAVE MARKED YOU, MS. RAVENMOCKER. WHEREVER YOU RUN... I WILL FIND YOU.
AND I WILL REVEAL...

...WHATEVER HORRORS...YOU... HIDE?
NEXT: MONSTERS! TRUCKS! MONSTER TRUCKS!

"MY SWEET RED TOMORROW."

THAT IS WHAT THE STRANGE CREATURE THAT ABDUCTED BRIAR SAID AS WE BATTLED...

...BEFORE I FOLLOWED HER FROM THE AUTOMOBILE GRAVEYARD ABOVE TO THE CRYPT BELOW.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS. OR WHY THE CREATURE SOUGHT TO TAKE MY HEART, LIKE THE RAVEN MOCKER OF CHEROKEE LEGEND.

BRIAR!

AH.

THUNNK

THE LACK OF ANSWERS MAKES THE NEED TO FIND MY TRAVELING PARTNER EVEN MORE PRESSING.

THE CHAIN GOES TAUT. THE SMELLS OF BURNING OIL AND EXHAUST FILL THE AIR.

AND IT SEEMS INSTEAD OF THE IRRITABLE ONE-EYED WITCH I SOUGHT...
VARROOOM
...I HAVE FOUND MS. RAVENMOCKER.
DEATH ON TINY WHITE WINGS.
SALVATION.
THE SWAMP THING IN BOG OF BLOOD PART TWO
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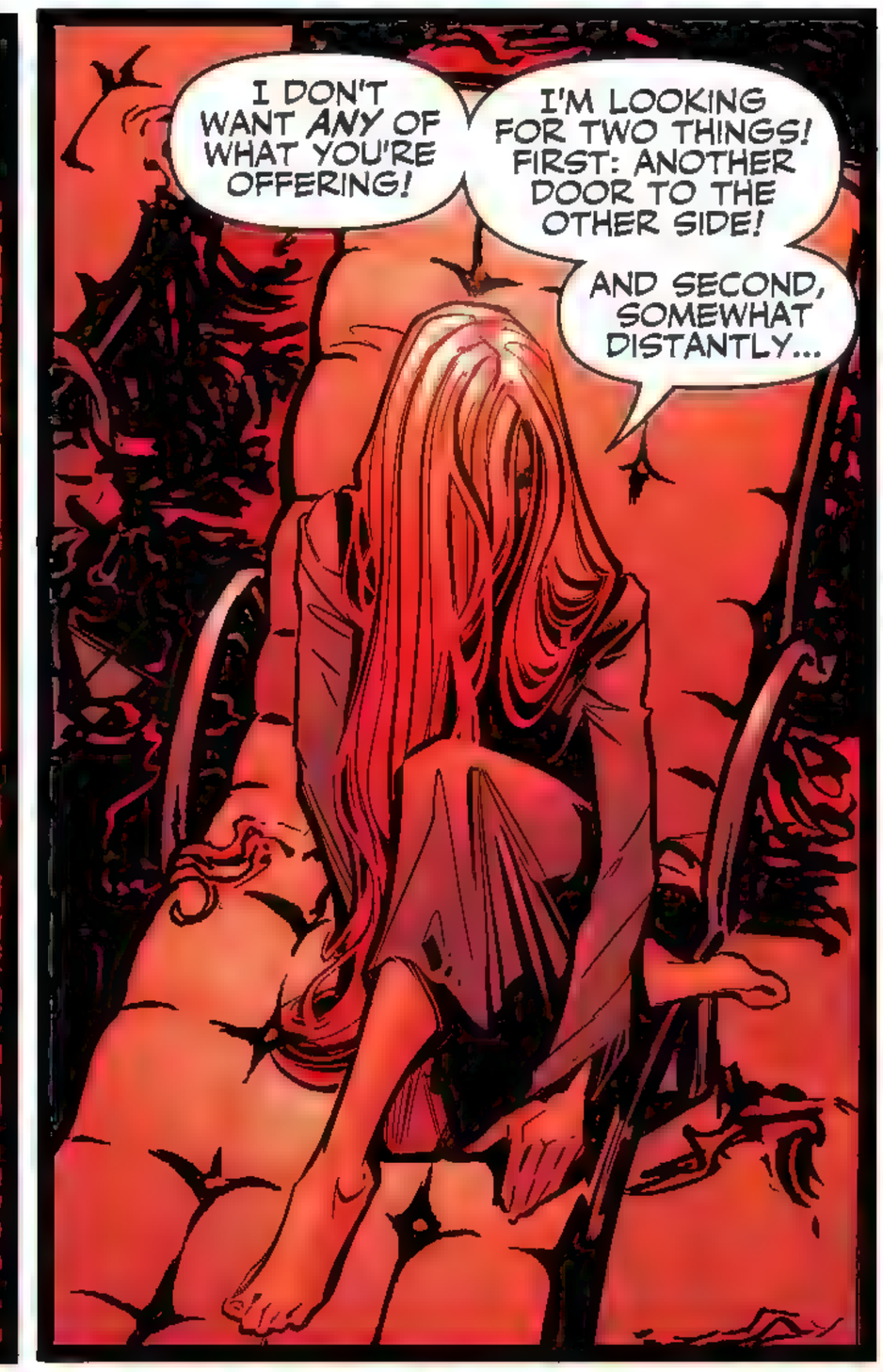
CHRIS CONROY EDITOR
JAMIE S. RICH GROUP EDITOR



...A BUNCH OF...

...DUMB...

...KIDS.

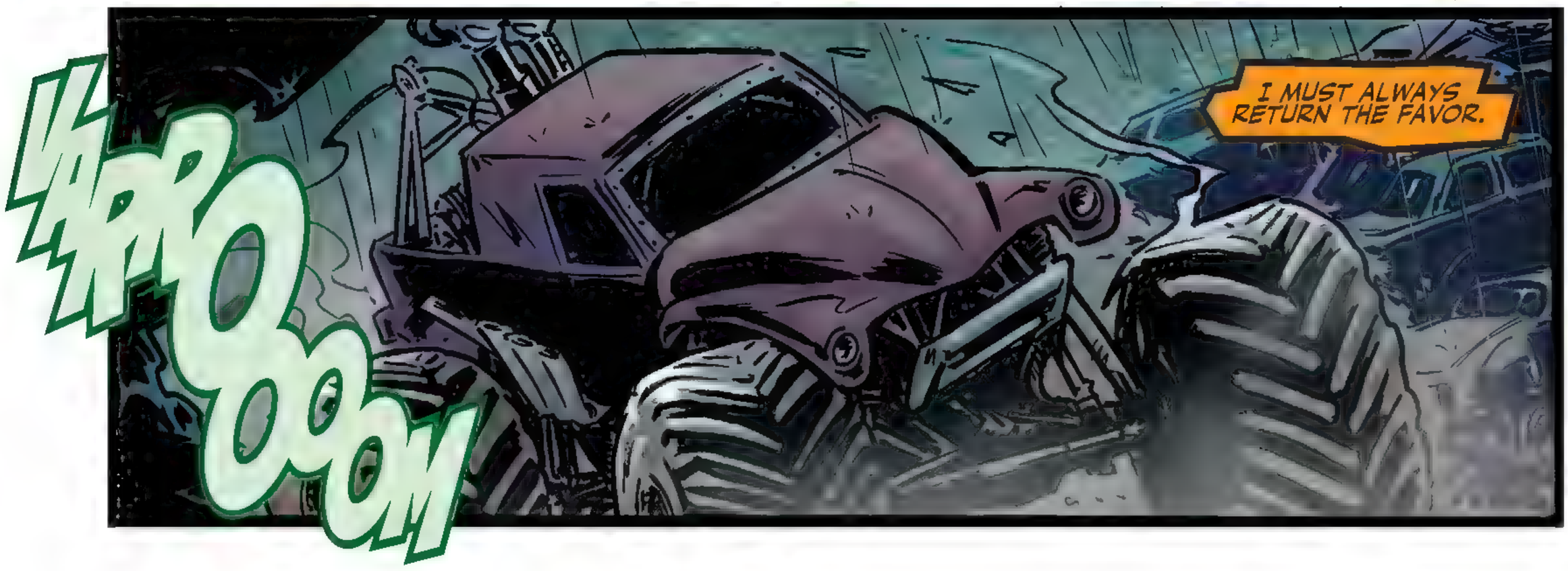
WELL. THAT WAS A FREEBIE.

HNH!
METAL RENDS MY BODY. LAYERS OF MY GREEN FLESH COAT THE RUSTED BODIES OF CARS LIKE A NEW SKIN OF PAINT.

IF THIS CONTINUES, THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF ME TO FIND THE LOST CHILDREN. TO FIND BRIAR.

ONCE, THE UNIVERSE SAW FIT TO REPLACE MY CHARRED FLESH WITH VITAL GREEN. HELD OUT A HAND TO PULL ME FROM THE MUCK WHERE MY CORPSE LAY.

RRUNCH
A SINGULAR MIRACLE CHOSE TO SAVE ME FROM THE BLACKNESS OF OBLIVION.


I MUST ALWAYS RETURN THE FAVOR.
BOOOM

WAR-
BOOOM
I WOULD LIKE TO UNDERSTAND... YOUR DESIRES, CREATURE. WHY YOU FEEL THE NEED TO TAKE...CHILDREN.
BUT, FAILING THAT... I WILL SETTLE FOR...
...YOUR... DEMOLITION.
THRAKOOM
I STOLE NO CHILDREN.
-HNNGH-

I COLLECTED THE DEAD!

I DID WHAT I MUST!
SSHRRUK

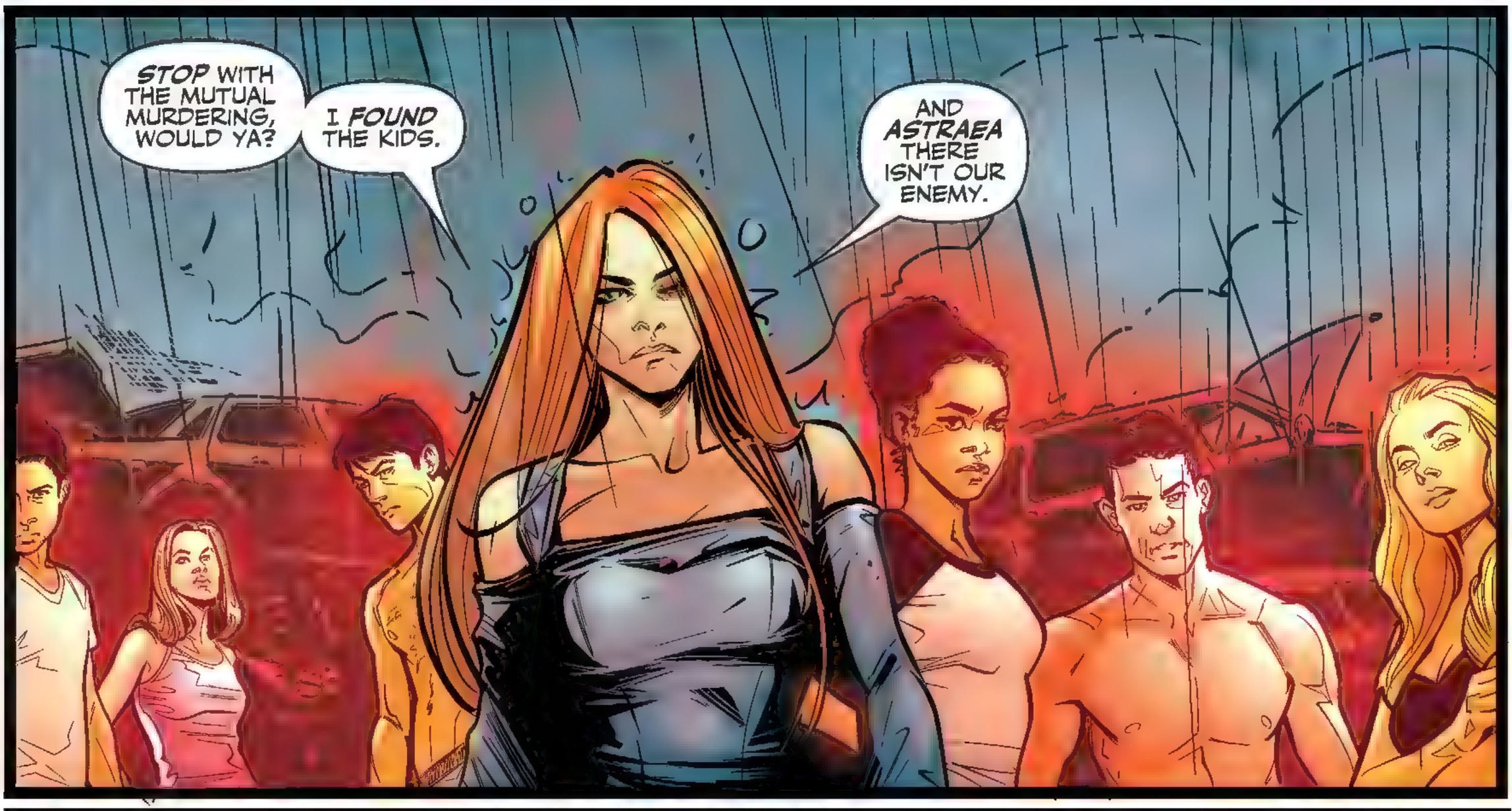
WHAAGHK!
KRAK

WHAT...I WAS... REBORN FOR.

...YOU... YOU'RE JUST A CHILD--

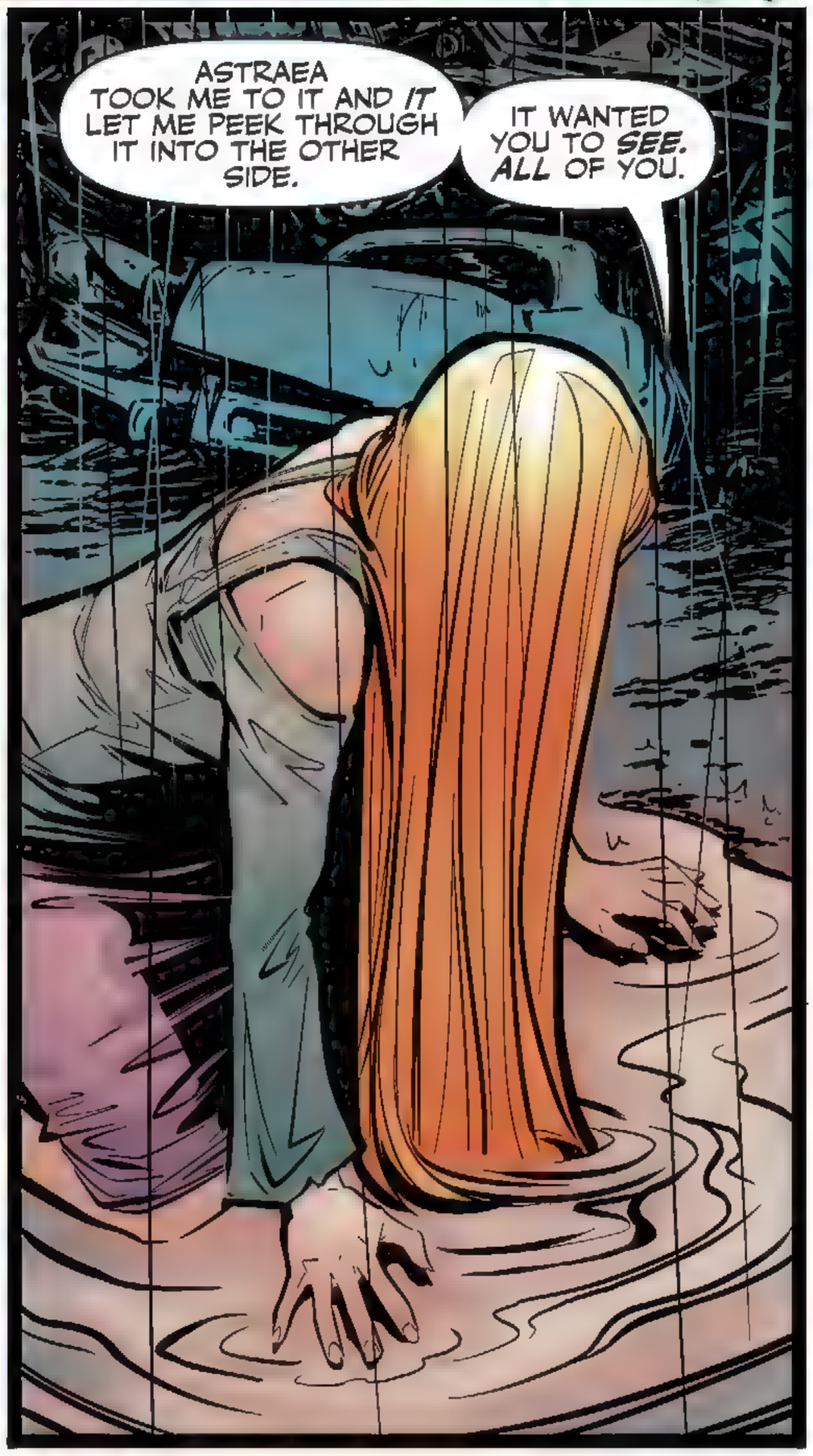
AND YOU ARE AN ENEMY.
KATHROOM
A BRINGER OF DEATH ON THICK GREEN LEGS.
THE UNBLOOD.
AND WHAT GIVES LIFE TO THE WORTHY...
THOK
...IS POISON TO YOU.
SLASH
I AM FLOODED WITH SENSATIONS I THOUGHT LONG LOST TO ME.

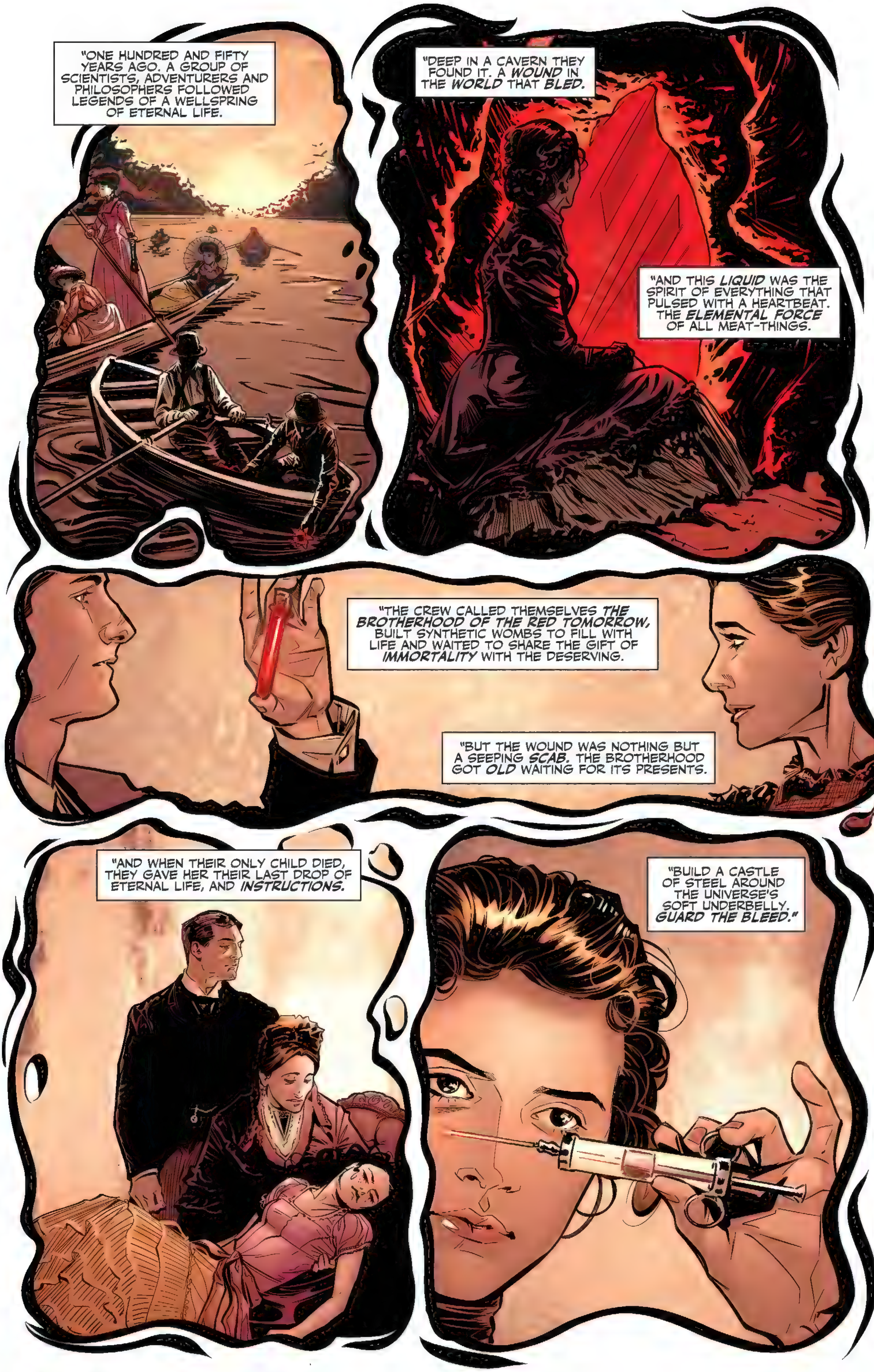
THE PULSING RHYTHM OF WARM LIQUID THROUGH VEINS.
THE CRACKLE OF ANIMAL URGES.
AND THE AGONY OF RAW NERVES.
ARRGH!
THE LIQUID SHE INJECTS ME WITH IS MAKING PLANT INTO FLESH.
MY BODY FLOODS THE DAMAGED TISSUE WITH HEALING CELLS.
BUT IT WILL NOT WITHSTAND ANOTHER DOSE.
THE ELEMENTAL GREEN THAT SUSTAINS ME WILL DIE.
THOUGH IF I'M TO FACE ANNIHILATION...SHE WILL FACE IT WITH ME.
SWAMP THING!

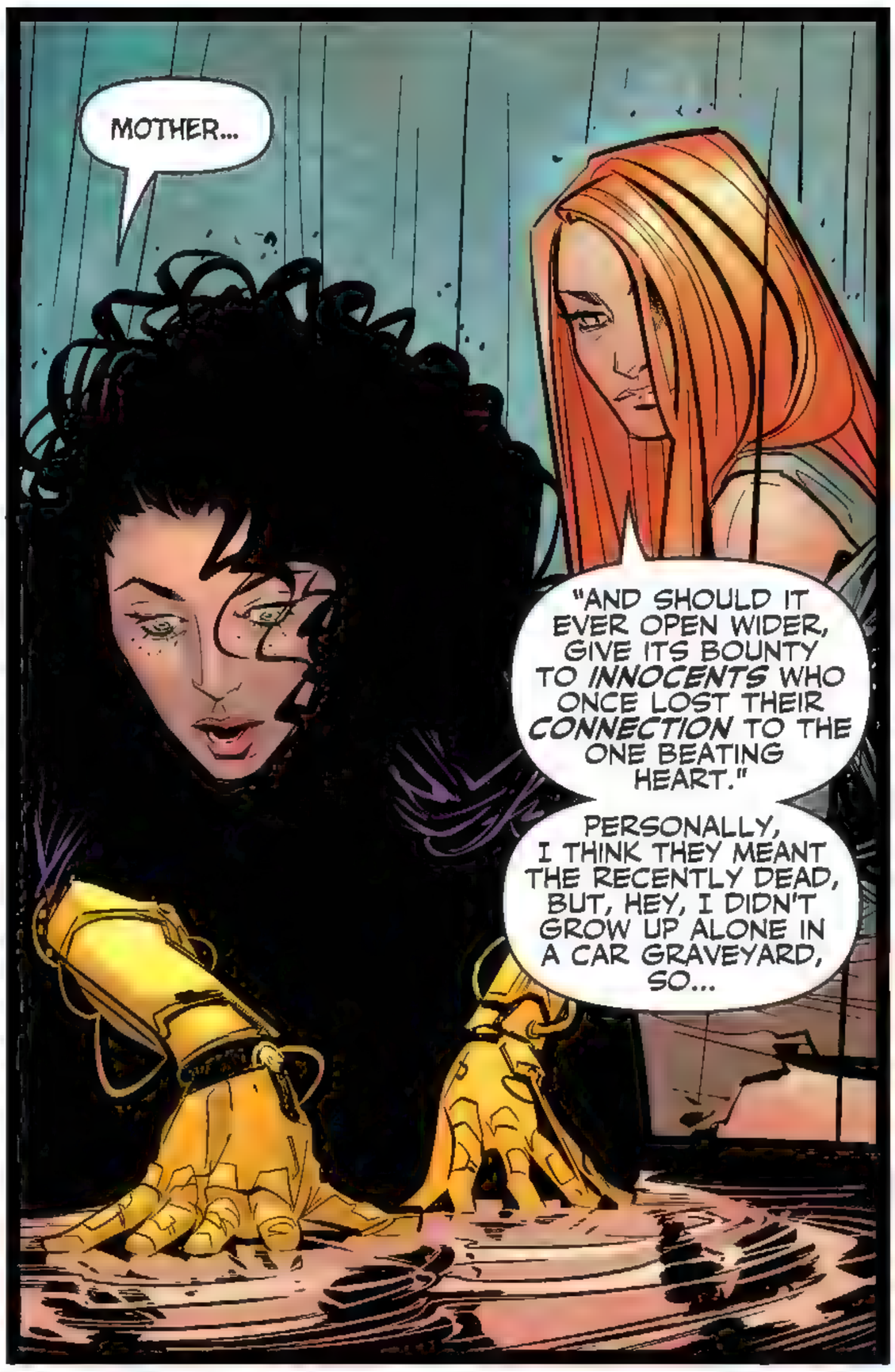

STOP WITH THE MUTUAL MURDERING, WOULD YA?
I FOUND THE KIDS.
AND ASTRAEA THERE ISN'T OUR ENEMY.

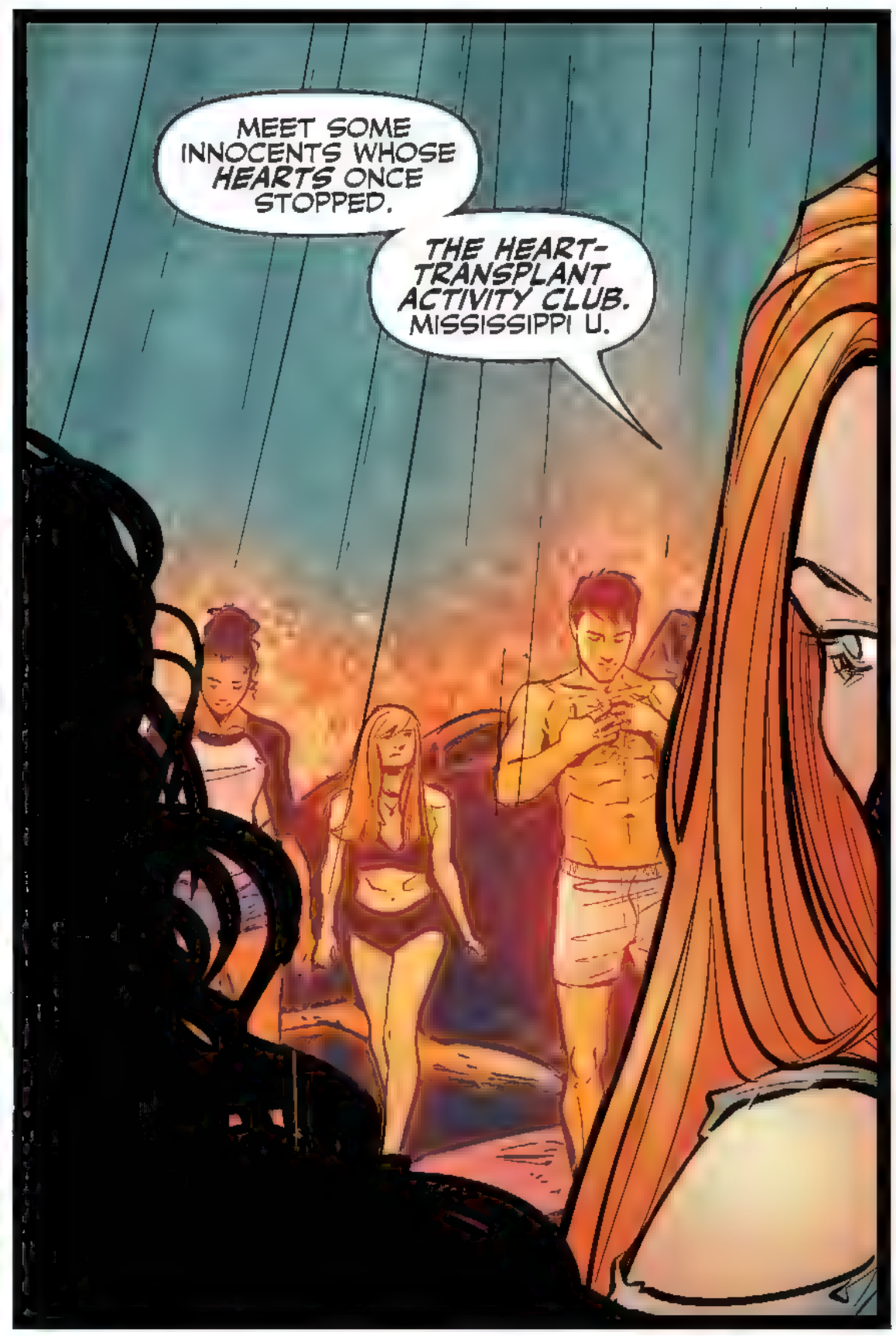
YOU...YOU SPOKE MY NAME. NOT THE ONE THEY WHISPER OF ME. MY TRUE NAME. ASTRAEA. GODDESS OF LIFE AND INNOCENCE. IT HAS BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE HEARD IT.

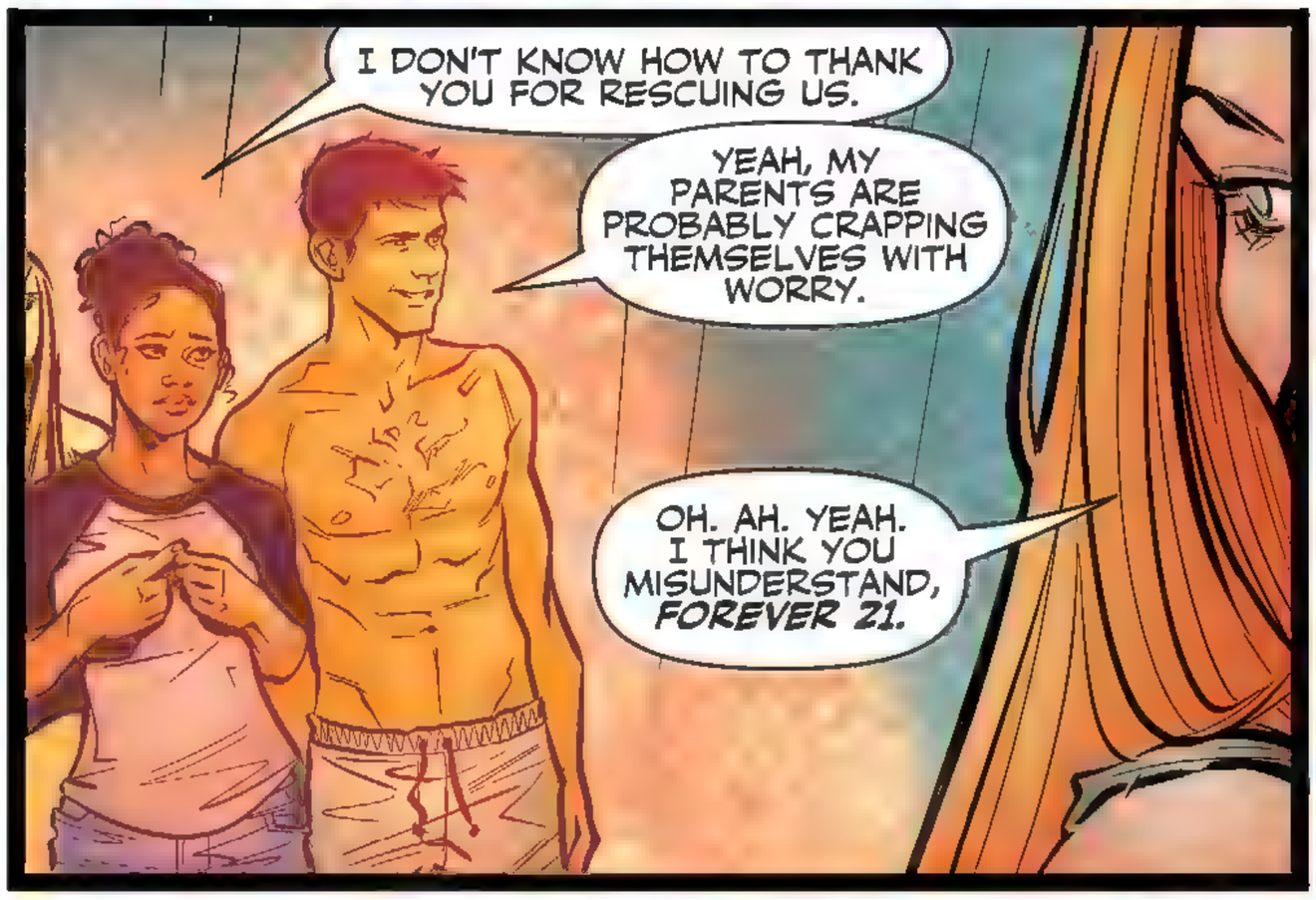
MY CAMPFIRE STORY. IT WAS TRUE. SWAMP THING IS REAL.
THIS...THIS WILL DEFINITELY KEEP ME UP AT NIGHT.
HNRH.
HOW DO YOU...KNOW THIS, BRIAR?

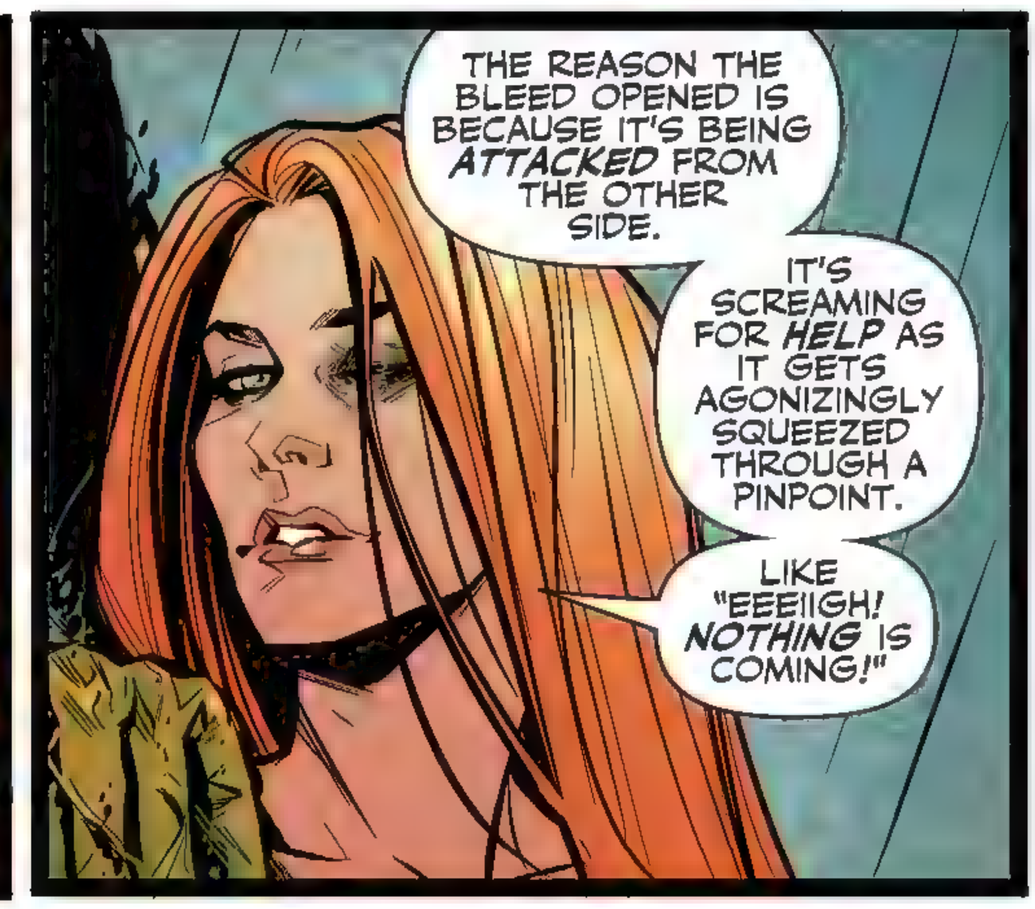

ASTRAEA TOOK ME TO IT AND IT LET ME PEEK THROUGH IT INTO THE OTHER SIDE.
IT WANTED YOU TO SEE. ALL OF YOU.

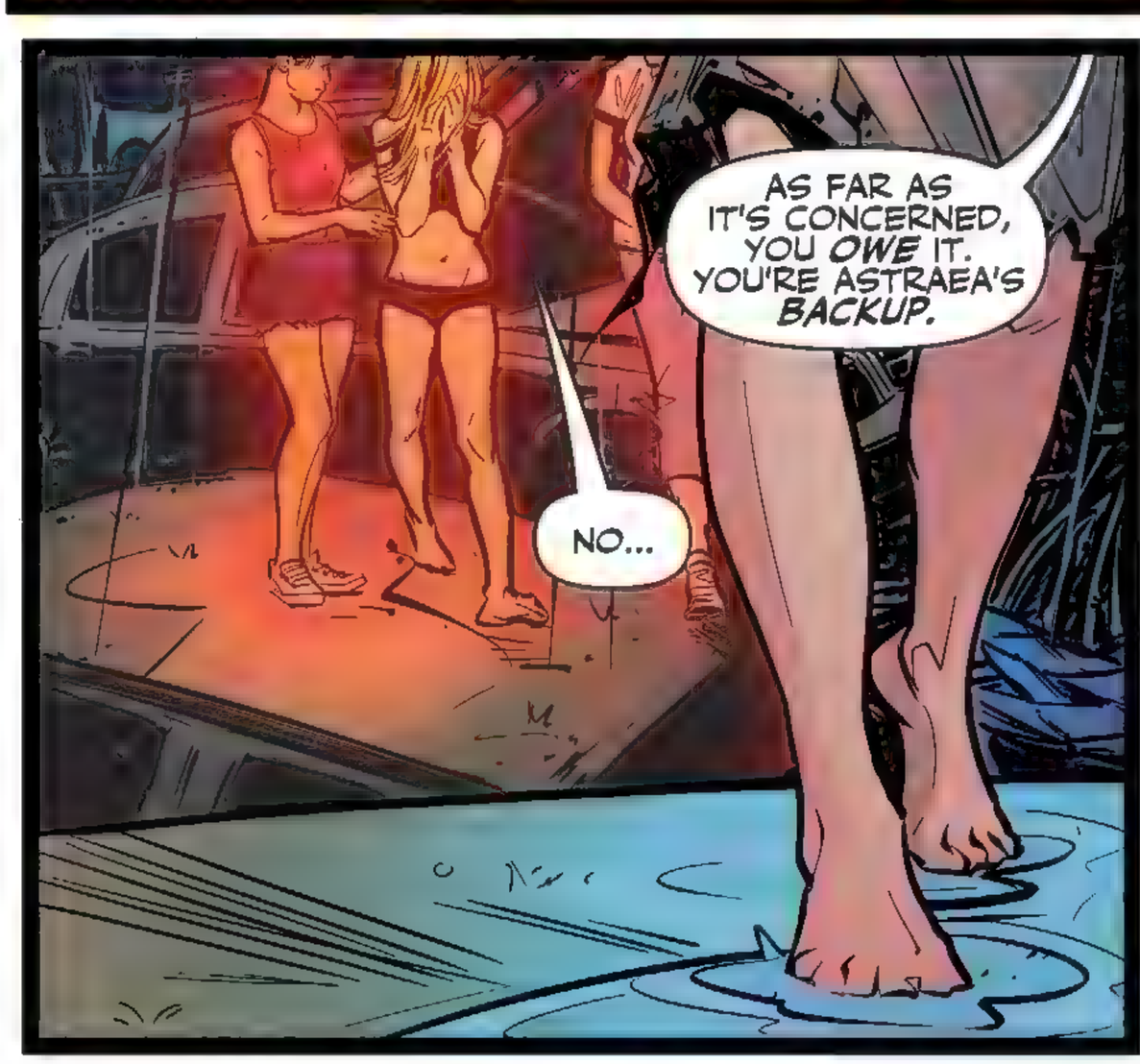

"ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS AGO. A GROUP OF SCIENTISTS, ADVENTURERS AND PHILOSOPHERS FOLLOWED LEGENDS OF A WELLSPRING OF ETERNAL LIFE.
"DEEP IN A CAVERN THEY FOUND IT. A *WOUND* IN THE *WORLD* THAT *BLED*.
"AND THIS *LIQUID* WAS THE SPIRIT OF EVERYTHING THAT PULSED WITH A HEARTBEAT. THE *ELEMENTAL FORCE* OF ALL MEAT-THINGS.
"THE CREW CALLED THEMSELVES *THE BROTHERHOOD OF THE RED TOMORROW*, BUILT SYNTHETIC WOMBS TO FILL WITH LIFE AND WAITED TO SHARE THE GIFT OF *IMMORTALITY* WITH THE DESERVING.
"BUT THE WOUND WAS NOTHING BUT A SEEPING *SCAB*. THE BROTHERHOOD GOT *OLD* WAITING FOR ITS PRESENTS.
"AND WHEN THEIR ONLY CHILD DIED, THEY GAVE HER THEIR LAST DROP OF ETERNAL LIFE, AND *INSTRUCTIONS*.
"BUILD A CASTLE OF STEEL AROUND THE UNIVERSE'S SOFT UNDERBELLY. *GUARD THE BLEED*."

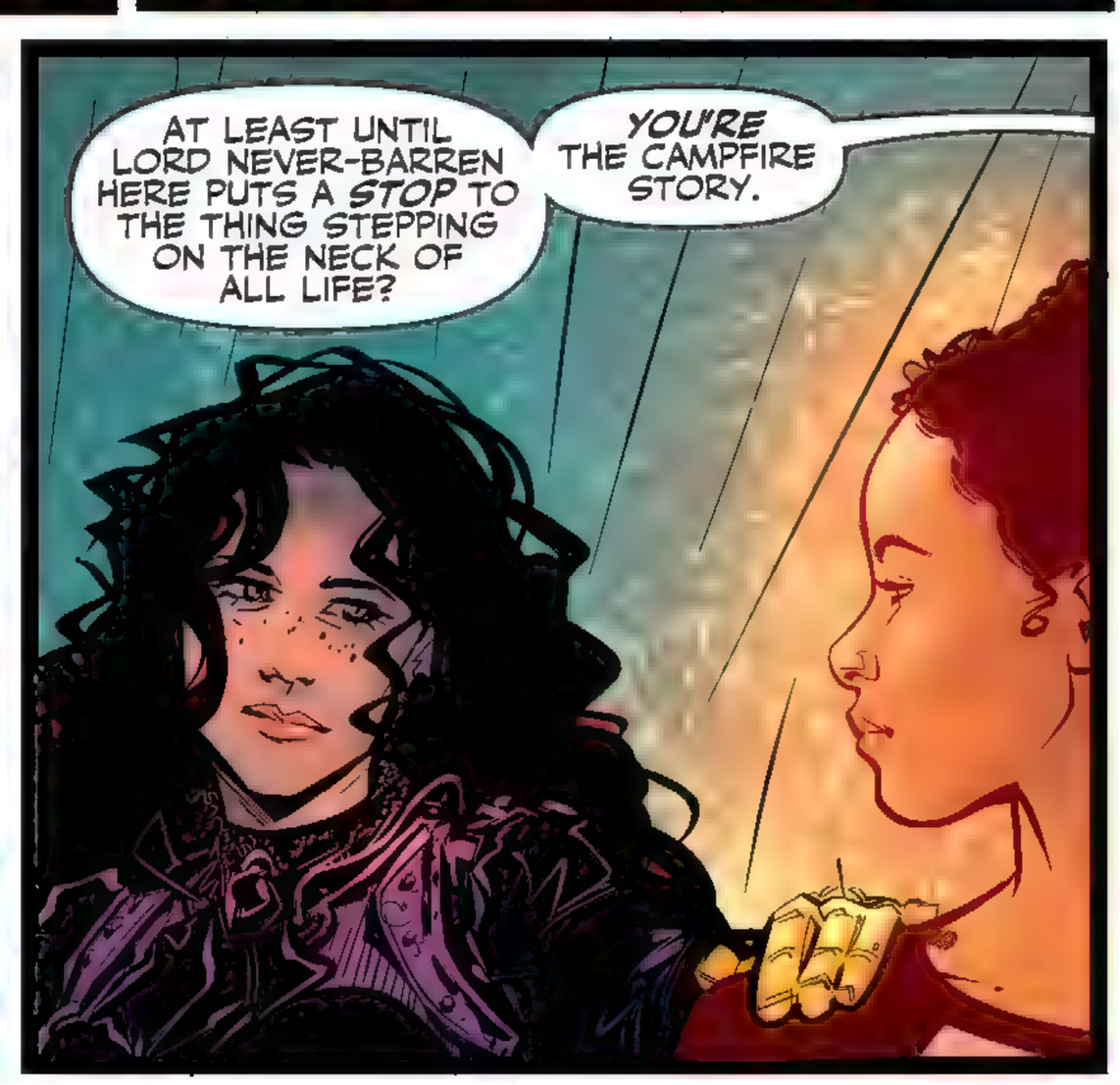

MOTHER...
"AND SHOULD IT EVER OPEN WIDER, GIVE ITS BOUNTY TO *INNOCENTS* WHO ONCE LOST THEIR *CONNECTION* TO THE ONE BEATING HEART."
PERSONALLY, I THINK THEY MEANT THE RECENTLY DEAD, BUT, HEY, I DIDN'T GROW UP ALONE IN A CAR GRAVEYARD, SO...

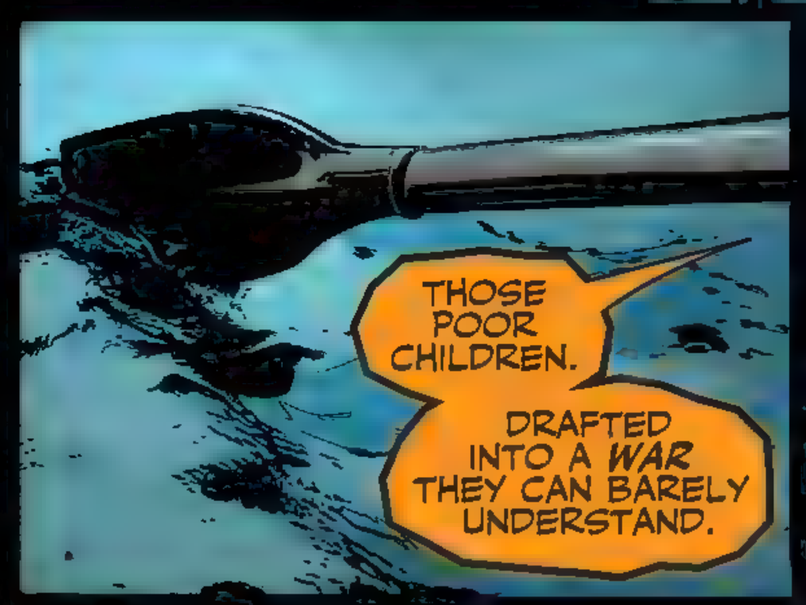

MEET SOME INNOCENTS WHOSE *HEARTS* ONCE STOPPED.
THE HEART-TRANSPLANT ACTIVITY CLUB. MISSISSIPPI U.

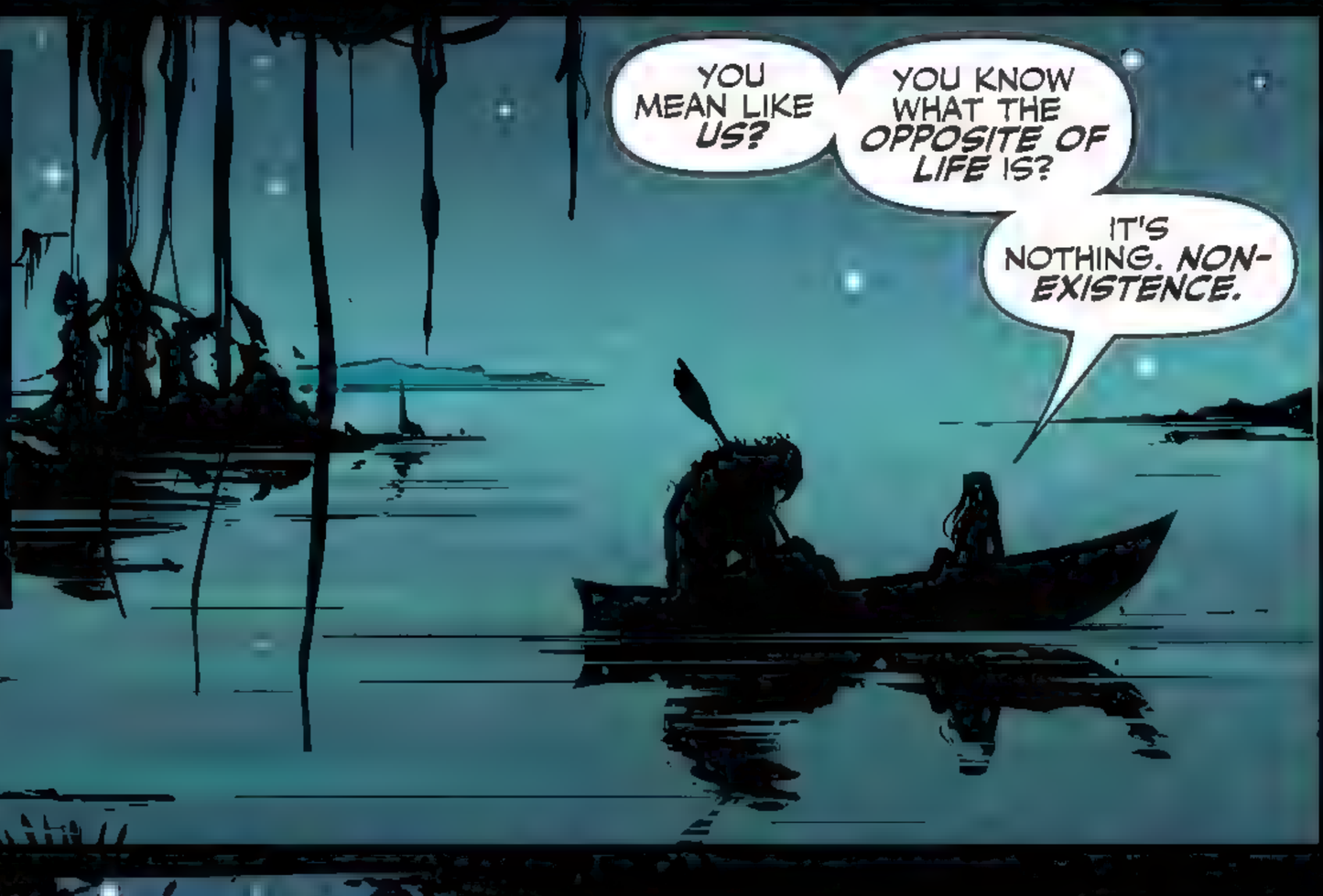

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU FOR RESCUING US.
YEAH, MY PARENTS ARE PROBABLY CRAPPING THEMSELVES WITH WORRY.
OH. AH. YEAH. I THINK YOU MISUNDERSTAND, *FOREVER 21.*


THE REASON THE BLEED OPENED IS BECAUSE IT'S BEING *ATTACKED* FROM THE OTHER SIDE.
IT'S SCREAMING FOR *HELP* AS IT GETS AGONIZINGLY SQUEEZED THROUGH A PINPOINT.
LIKE "EEEIIGH! *NOTHING* IS COMING!"


AS FAR AS IT'S CONCERNED, YOU *OWE* IT. YOU'RE ASTRAEA'S *BACKUP.*
NO...


AT LEAST UNTIL LORD NEVER-BARREN HERE PUTS A *STOP* TO THE THING STEPPING ON THE NECK OF ALL LIFE?
YOU'RE THE CAMPFIRE STORY.





YES, TWIGLET. WE NEED...TO HAVE A GOOD, LONG TALK...

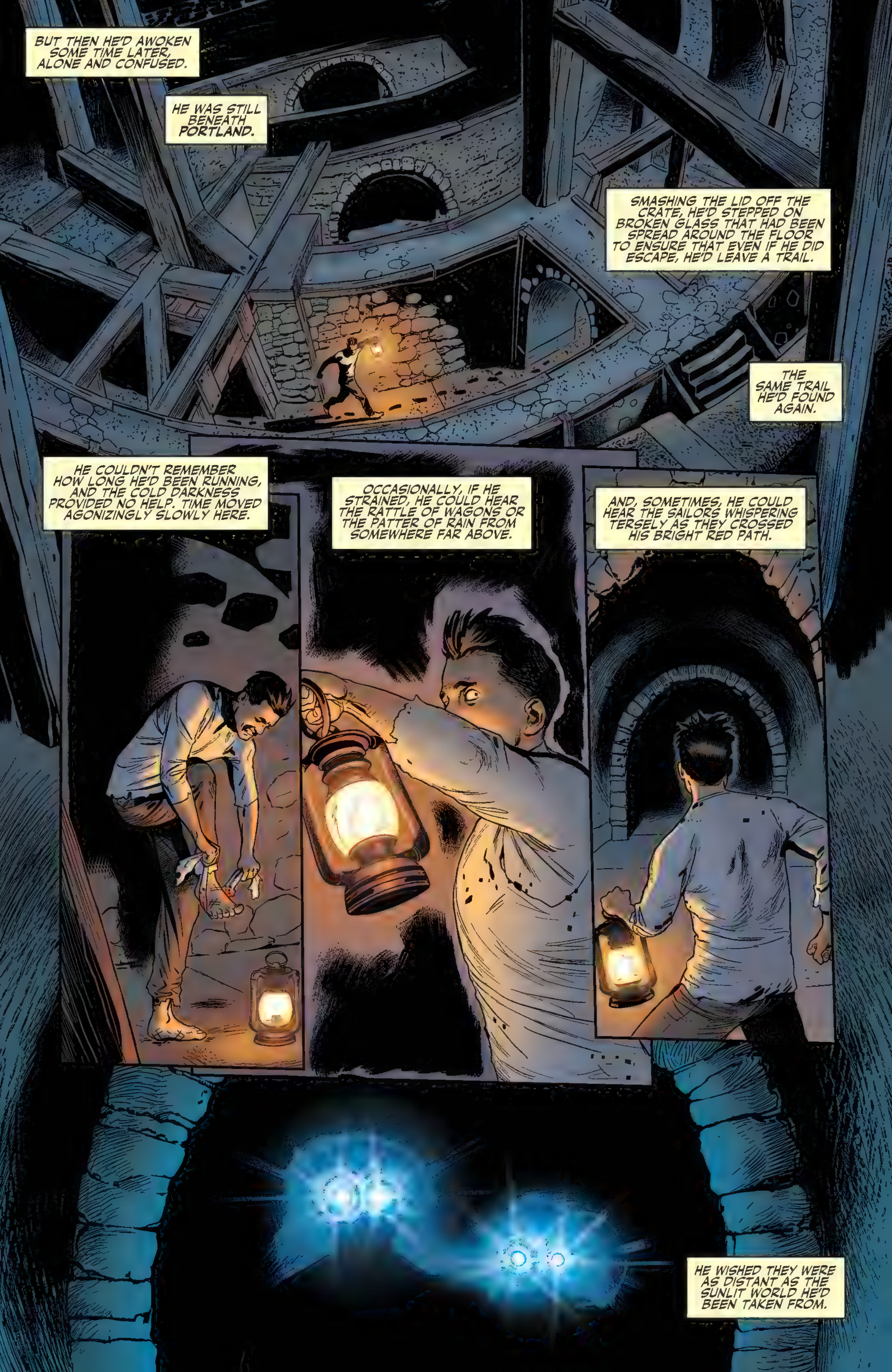
...WITH *DEATH.*

NEXT: HOUSE OF SPIRITS!

THE LIGHT OF THE LANTERN GLINTS OFF THE BLOODY FOOTPRINT BEFORE HIM.
STILL FRESH. STILL WARM.
IT MEANS GEORGE CROSSED THIS WAY VERY RECENTLY.
IT MEANS HE'S LOST, WALKING IN CIRCLES, NO CLOSER TO FINDING HIS WAY OUT OF THE WINDING, DARK LABYRINTH.
AND HE REMEMBERS.
BULL'S-EYE!
GEORGE DRAWS IN A DEEP BREATH AND SWALLOWS THE SCREAM NESTLED AT THE BACK OF HIS THROAT.

LOOKS LIKE I FINALLY OWE *YOU* A DRINK, COUNTRY BOY.
LIKE I SAID, I'M TOO STUBBORN TO GIVE UP, MISS.
-INGH- TASTES LIKE GASOLINE, BUT A PRIZE IS A PRIZE.
NOW I BEST BE GOIN'. PROMISED MY MOM I'D STILL GO TO CHURCH ON SUNDAY MORNINGS NO MATTER WHERE I ENDED UP.
WHOOGH.
OH HONEY. YOU FEELIN' ILL?
DIZZY...
COME ON NOW. LET'S GET YOU SOMEWHERE TO LIE DOWN.
WHUH... WHERE ARE YOU TAKIN' ME?
I CAN'T SAY, HONEY.
BUT I HOPE WHEREVER YOU END UP...
...THEY GOT A CHURCH.
GEORGE HAD FELT THE WALL GIVE WAY BEHIND HIM.

HE'D CURSED HIMSELF FOR HIS LONELINESS.
HE'D CURSED HIS REFUSAL TO LOSE.
AND THEN HE'D TUMBLED INTO NOTHING.
HNF
THROUGH HIS ATTEMPT TO CATCH HIS BREATH, HE'D HEARD HUSHED VOICES ARGUING. HE WAS SMALL, ONE SAID. SMALL MEN MADE GOOD RIGGERS, THE OTHER SAID.
GEORGE HAD WANTED TO FIGHT THESE MEN. TO SEE THEIR FACES AS HE SMASHED HIS FIST INTO THEM.
BUT THE SHOT GLASS CONTAINED MORE THAN CHEAP WHISKEY.
YOU'LL SERVE AND YOU'LL TOIL.
'CAUSE YOU'RE OURS NOW, BOY.
GEORGE FADED INTO OBLIVION AS THE TWO WHISPERING SAILORS DRAGGED HIM TOWARD A CRATE BOUND FOR ASIA.


BUT THEN HE'D AWOKEN SOME TIME LATER, ALONE AND CONFUSED.
HE WAS STILL BENEATH PORTLAND.
SMASHING THE LID OFF THE CRATE, HE'D STEPPED ON BROKEN GLASS THAT HAD BEEN SPREAD AROUND THE FLOOR TO ENSURE THAT EVEN IF HE DID ESCAPE, HE'D LEAVE A TRAIL.
THE SAME TRAIL HE'D FOUND AGAIN.
HE COULDN'T REMEMBER HOW LONG HE'D BEEN RUNNING, AND THE COLD DARKNESS PROVIDED NO HELP. TIME MOVED AGONIZINGLY SLOWLY HERE.
OCCASIONALLY, IF HE STRAINED, HE COULD HEAR THE RATTLE OF WAGONS OR THE PATTER OF RAIN FROM SOMEWHERE FAR ABOVE.
AND, SOMETIMES, HE COULD HEAR THE SAILORS WHISPERING TERSELY AS THEY CROSSED HIS BRIGHT RED PATH.
HE WISHED THEY WERE AS DISTANT AS THE SUNLIT WORLD HE'D BEEN TAKEN FROM.

BUT THEY WERE ALWAYS MUCH CLOSER.
AHN!
NOW NO LONGER AFFECTED BY THE OPIUM-LACED DRINK, GEORGE LASHES OUT AT ONE OF THE SAILORS.
BUT WHAT HE TOUCHES IS COLD AND WET, SUBTLY VIBRATING WITH AN UNNATURAL RHYTHM.
SOMETHING THAT ISN'T HUMAN. HAS NEVER BEEN HUMAN.
YOU'LL SERVE AND YOU'LL TOIL.
'CAUSE YOU'RE OURS NOW, BOY.
HNGH?!
THE CREATURE'S SURPRISE IS FOLLOWED BY A STRONG SCENT.
ONE SO FOREIGN TO THESE MOLDERING DEPTHS.

A SCENT GEORGE ASSOCIATES WITH THE WEST VIRGINIA FARM HE'D LEFT BEHIND.
OF GREEN THINGS.
OF GROWTH.
OF LIFE.
THE SWAMP THING IN DEAD FALLS
TIM SEELEY WRITER
STEVE PUGH ARTIST
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AT FIRST GEORGE IS TOO STUNNED TO DO ANYTHING BUT WATCH.
THE LANTERN ROLLING ACROSS THE FLOOR ILLUMINATES...
...A SCENE...
...OF COMPLETE...
...SAVAGERY.
GEORGE RUNS.
WAIT... DO NOT... GO.
HE DOESN'T KNOW FOR HOW LONG.

LIGHT GLINTS OFF THE BARE STONE BEFORE HIM.
HE'S NEVER BEEN THIS WAY BEFORE.
FINALLY.
THE WAY OUT OF THIS DARK, WINDING LABYRINTH, HE STEPS FORWARD.
HE DOESN'T KNOW WHY.
BUT HE PAUSES.
COME...
ONE MORE STEP. BEFORE THE WRAITH RE-FORMS.
ONE MORE STEP.
AND YOU'LL BE FREE.

NO WORRIES, *SWAMP THING.* I MEAN, JUST TAKE YOUR SWEET TIME.

IT'S NOT LIKE *NECROMANCY* IS REALLY HARD OR ANYTHING.

WHAT... WHAT'S THIS?!

YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN TOO STUBBORN... TO GIVE UP, GEORGE.

AND SO YOU HAVE RUN THESE TUNNELS...FOR *132 YEARS.*

NO.

AN INFECTION...IN YOUR HEEL. DIRTY GLASS EMBEDDED DEEP WITHIN. IT TOOK SOME TIME, BUT...

NO. I DENY IT!

YOU'VE LONG AVOIDED THE SCAVENGER DEMON HOPING TO ENSLAVE YOUR SOUL.

BUT THERE IS NO PRIZE OF FURTHER LIFE. NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES YOU PLAY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?

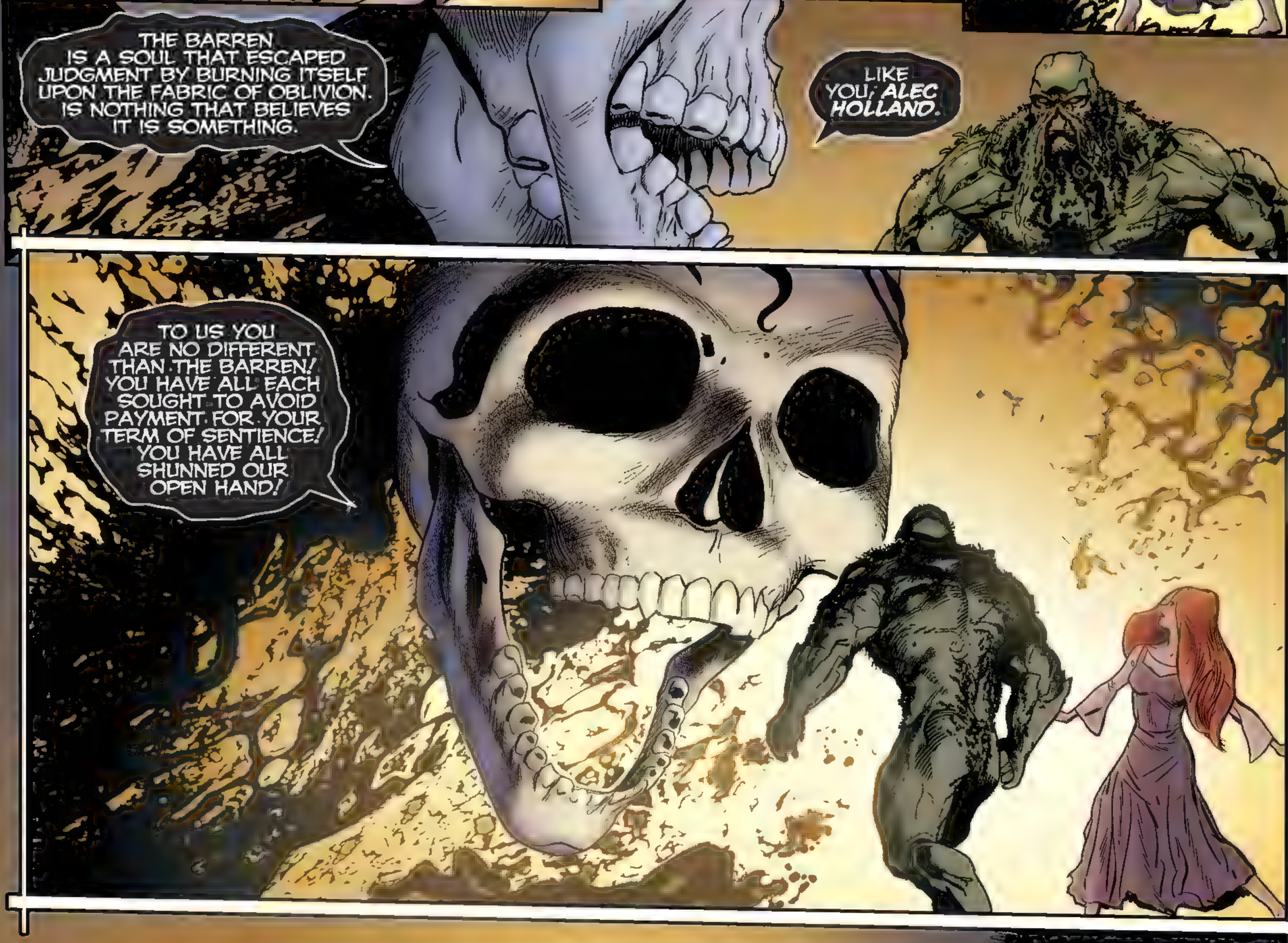
GEORGE?

COME HOME.
PLEASE. YOU'VE BEEN GONE SO LONG.
I'M COMIN', MOM.
I HOPE YOU WEREN'T TOO LONESOME. ALWAYS SUCH A GOOD BOY.
HAVE YOU BEEN GOIN' TO CHURCH?
YES, MOM.
EVERY
ALL RIGHT. YOU GOT YOURS. ONE *ITINERANT SPIRIT* WRAPPED IN A BOW.
NOW WE WANT *OURS.*

YOU SEEK ABETMENT FROM *THE CONFEDERATION OF REMAINS,* LITTLE EXISTENT THING?
Y-YEAH...
I MEAN *YES.* THE BARREN'S ALREADY STRUCK THE REALMS OF FLAME AND BLOOD AND EVIL AND NOW...

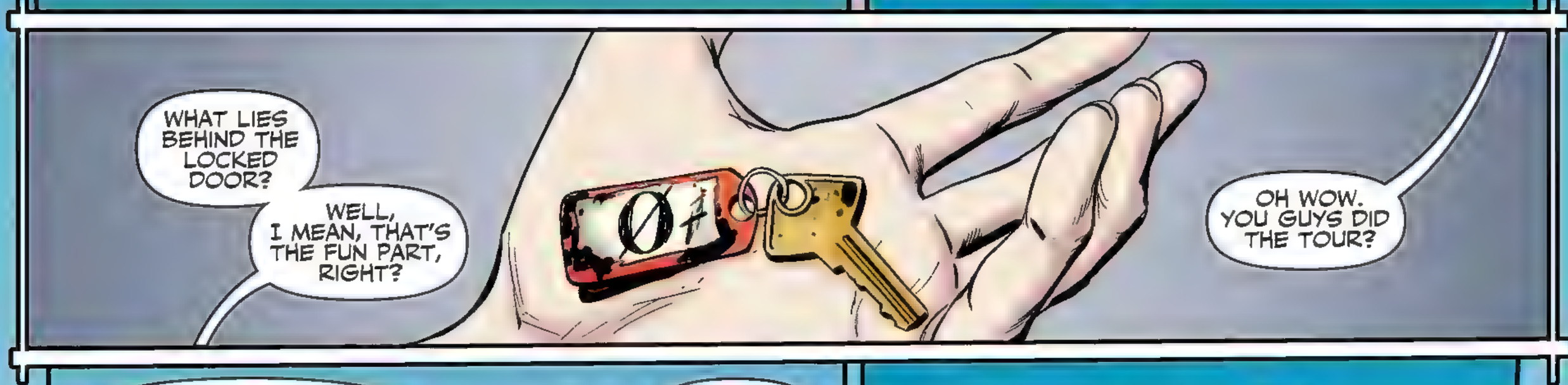
THE REMAINS KNOW OF THE CRIMES AGAINST THE *NATURAL ORDER* BY THE BARREN!
WERE WE NOT THE FIRST WRONGED?
YOU SEEK TO KNOW WHAT THE BARREN IS?

THE BARREN WAS A SEEKER, DETERMINED TO PEER BEYOND WHAT CAN BE SEEN, TO FIND A VESSEL FOR THE MIND GREATER THAN THE IMPERMANENT FLESH.
LIKE YOU, BRIAR *WOODRUE.*

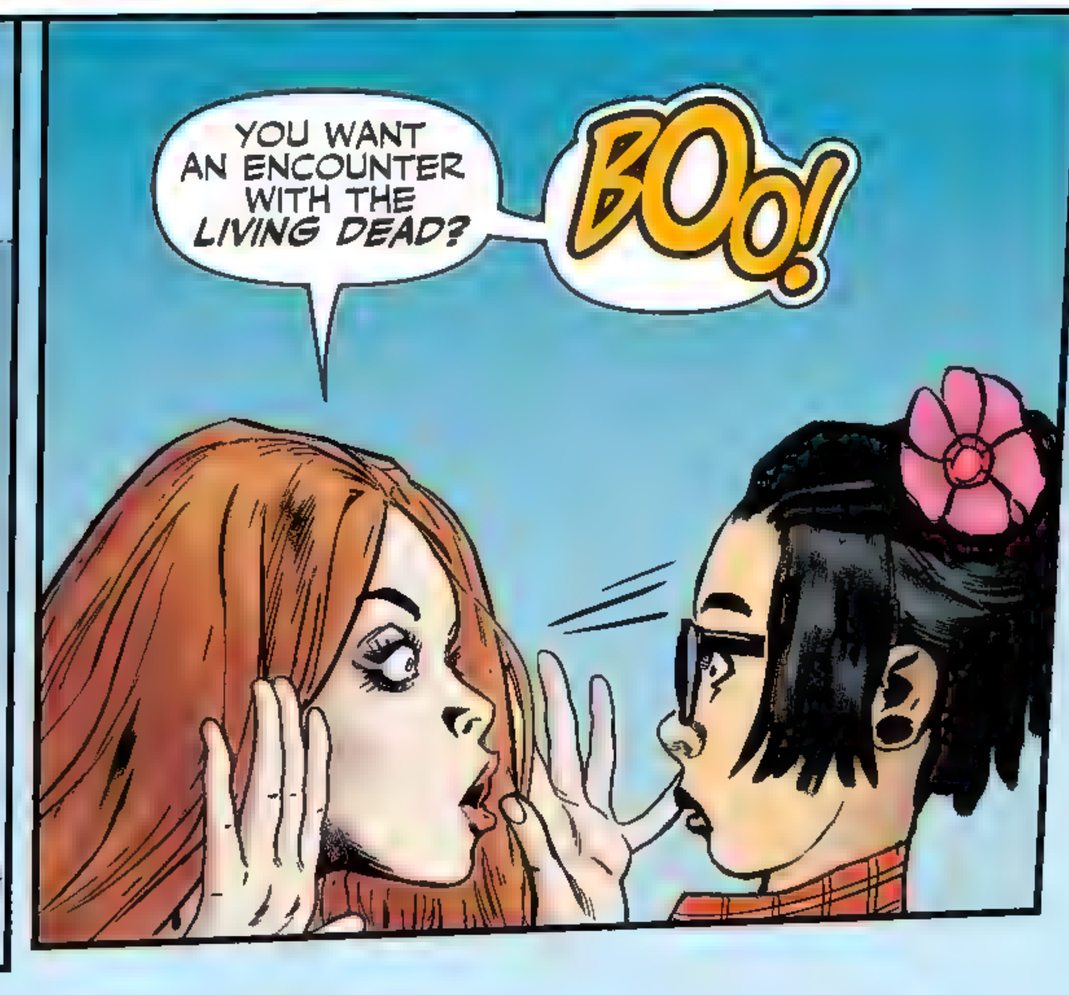

THE BARREN IS A SOUL THAT ESCAPED JUDGMENT BY BURNING ITSELF UPON THE FABRIC OF OBLIVION. IS NOTHING THAT BELIEVES IT IS SOMETHING.
LIKE YOU, *ALEC HOLLAND.*
TO US YOU ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN THE BARREN! YOU HAVE ALL EACH SOUGHT TO AVOID PAYMENT FOR YOUR TERM OF SENTIENCE! YOU HAVE ALL SHUNNED OUR OPEN HAND!

YOU SEEK OUR ADVICE?!
KNOW THAT NO MATTER HOW LONG YOU RUN, YOU WILL ALL EVENTUALLY FIND THE PATH BACK TO DEATH.

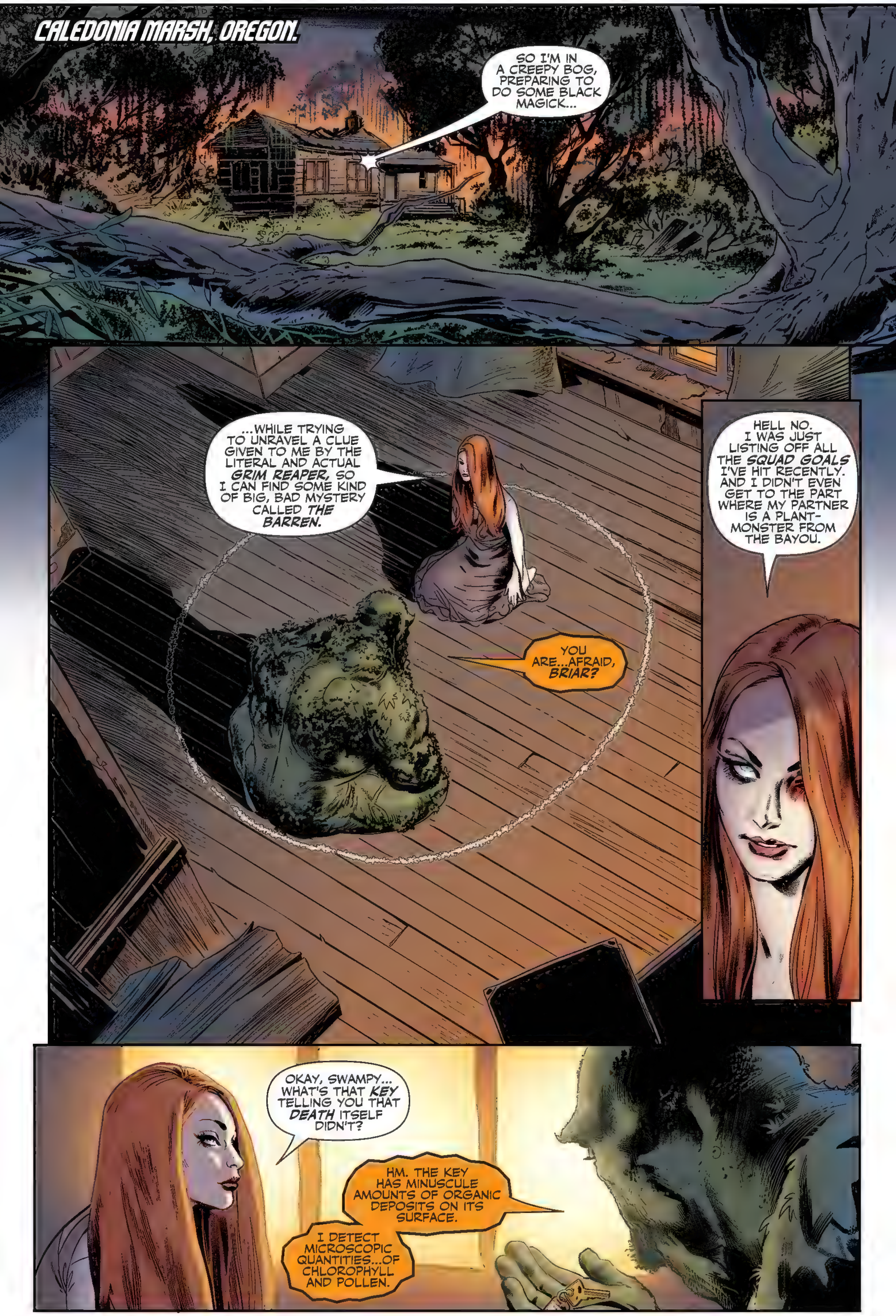
SHANGHAI TUNNELS
WALKING TOUR
I BELIEVE THAT IS THE FIRST TIME...I'VE SEEN YOU SCARED.
WHAT? PSSH. I WAS JUST TRYING TO KEEP A STRAIGHT FACE, BECAUSE IN THE MIDDLE OF ALL THAT BLUSTER AND "DOOOM," OL' GRIMMY TOTALLY DROPPED A CLUE INTO MY HAND.


WHAT LIES BEHIND THE LOCKED DOOR?
WELL, I MEAN, THAT'S THE FUN PART, RIGHT?
OH WOW. YOU GUYS DID THE TOUR?

IS IT ANY GOOD? I HEARD PEOPLE SOMETIMES SEE A LANTERN LIGHT WANDERING THE TUNNELS OR SPOT BLOODY FOOTPRINTS!
ACTUALLY, YOU CAN SAVE YOUR MONEY.


YOU WANT AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE *LIVING DEAD?*
BOO!

YOU JUST HAD ONE.
NEXT: SEARCH FOR NOTHING!


CALEDONIA MARSH, OREGON.
SO I'M IN A CREEPY BOG, PREPARING TO DO SOME BLACK MAGICK...
...WHILE TRYING TO UNRAVEL A CLUE GIVEN TO ME BY THE LITERAL AND ACTUAL GRIM REAPER, SO I CAN FIND SOME KIND OF BIG, BAD MYSTERY CALLED THE BARREN.
YOU ARE...AFRAID, BRIAR?
HELL NO. I WAS JUST LISTING OFF ALL THE SQUAD GOALS I'VE HIT RECENTLY. AND I DIDN'T EVEN GET TO THE PART WHERE MY PARTNER IS A PLANT-MONSTER FROM THE BAYOU.
OKAY, SWAMPY... WHAT'S THAT KEY TELLING YOU THAT DEATH ITSELF DIDN'T?
HM. THE KEY HAS MINUSCULE AMOUNTS OF ORGANIC DEPOSITS ON ITS SURFACE.
I DETECT MICROSCOPIC QUANTITIES...OF CHLOROPHYLL AND POLLEN.

THE *ELEMENTAL* IN ME TELLS ME THEY COME FROM CREEPING DOGWOOD AND ROCK FERN.
THE BOTANIST *ALEC HOLLAND* TELLS ME THAT MEANS THIS KEY HAS SPENT SOME TIME IN THE EASTERN CENTRAL UNITED STATES.
WELL, THAT'S A START.
BUT IF WE'RE OPENING A DOORWAY, I'M GONNA NEED SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE SPECIFIC OR WE RISK MATERIALIZING IN A GOLDEN CORRAL SALAD BAR.
HM...
THERE. OIL RESIDUE MIXED WITH HUMAN SKIN OILS. TRAPPED IN A FINGERPRINT... AND JUST AS DISTINCT.
DRACAENA FRAGRANS MASSANGEANA. A MASS CANE CORN PLANT.
I HEAR YOU, MY BRETHREN.
SHRRRM
I HEAR YOU...AND I AM COMING FOR A VISIT.

THE GREEN.
ELEMENTAL REALM OF PLANT LIFE.
IF THERE IS MORE TO BE LEARNED ABOUT THE BEING WHISPERED OF BY THOSE FROM THE OTHER REALM, WE MUST GO THIS WAY.
OH MY GODDESS! WE'RE HERE! WE ACTUALLY WENT THROUGH A DIMENSIONAL DOOR! AND IT SMELLS LIKE FRESHLY MOWED LAWN AND CUCUMBERS!
THE SWAMP THING IN
The OBSERVER EFFECT
PART ONE
TIM SEELEY WRITER
STEVE PUGH ARTIST
TRISH MULVIHILL COLORS
DAVE SHARPE LETTERS
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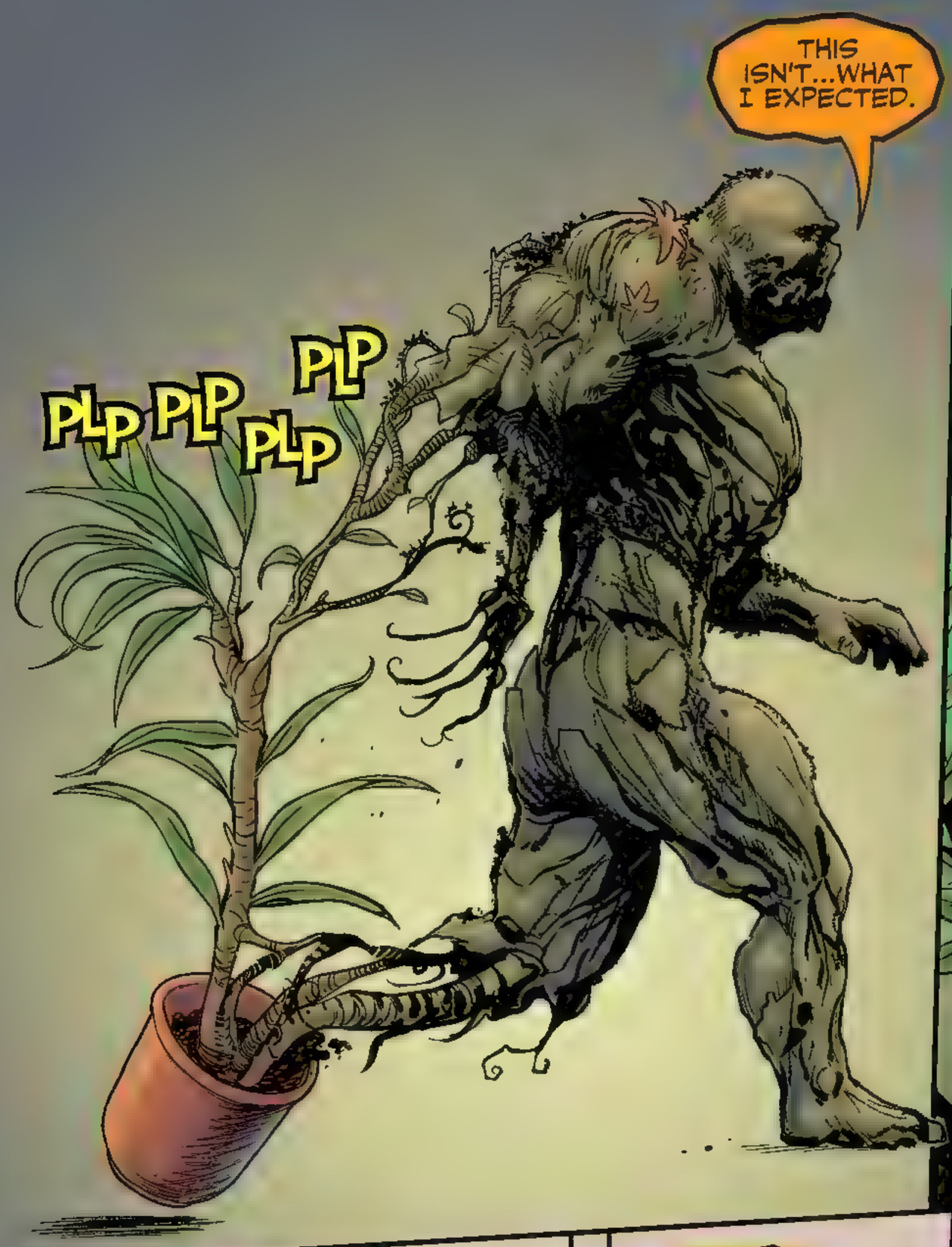
SPLAP
HEY, SWAMPY.
SO FAR ALL WE KNOW ABOUT *THE BARREN* IS THAT IT'S PUSHING ITS WAY AROUND AND IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO MAKE THE REALMS OF HELL, DEATH, FIRE AND LIFE APOPLECTIC.
BUT IN ALL THIS RUNNING AROUND THE COUNTRY WE NEVER TALKED ABOUT, LIKE...WHAT THE BARREN *IS.*
SO WHATCHA THINK? GRAY-BEARDED DARK WIZARD? REBELLIOUS DEMON WARLORD? RENEGADE FAIRY KING?
AS A SCIENTIST... I WILL THEORIZE WHEN I HAVE MORE...DATA.
AND YOU?
A *CTHULHU.* DEFINITELY SOME KIND OF *CTHULHU.*
PLP PLP PLP
YOUR PLANT, *DR. HEMSDALE.*

I SEE YOU'VE BEEN TAKING BETTER CARE OF IT SINCE I'VE BEEN ON... FURLOUGH.
I HAVE?
I THOUGHT FOR SURE THIS THING WAS DEAD YESTERDAY.
NOW, PAY ATTENTION, DR. SINGH. IT'S NOT GOOD TO LOSE GOVERNMENT PROPERTY.
ESPECIALLY A KEY TO A D.O.E. LAB. HERE'S YOUR REPLACEMENT.
YES. THANK YOU, DR. HEMSDALE.
OH. YOU DIDN'T CHANGE THE NUMBER.
I KNOW IT'S KIND OF ANAL... IT'S JUST, ZERO ISN'T ACTUALLY A NUMBER. IT'S THE ABSENCE OF SOMETHING.
EXACTLY. I'VE BEEN TAKING IT TOO EASY ON YOU. YOU'VE GOT ONE MORE CHANCE TO PROVE YOU WORK FOR ME AND THIS COUNTRY, KAMAL.
SCREW UP AGAIN, AND I'LL SHUT DOWN YOUR PROJECT.
IF THAT HAPPENS YOU WON'T BE "ZERO."
YOU'LL BE LESS THAN NOTHING.


THIS ISN'T...WHAT I EXPECTED.
PLP PLP PLP PLP

YEAH, JEEZ. DID YOU HEAR THAT LADY? WE'D HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF WITH A CTHULHU.
SO *THE BARREN* WORKS IN A CRAPPY OFFICE?

HM. *OAKHEART NATIONAL LABORATORY.* WEST VIRGINIA.
PRETTY GOOD GUESS, NERD. SO, MILITARY SCIENCE THEN?
THE KEY ORIGINALLY BELONGED TO THIS DR. SINGH. BUT DR. HEMSDALE'S PLANT WAS WHAT I DETECTED ON IT.

I'LL BE HONEST, I WAS HOPING TO GO UNDERCOVER AS A *SQUID CULTIST,* BUT MY DISGUISE SPELL SHOULD WORK JUST AS WELL FOR THIS.
BOOM. LAB CHIC.

I'LL FOLLOW SINGH. SEE WHAT A *ONE-EYED WITCH* CAN SEE.
I HAVE IMPLANTED A SMALL SEED IN YOUR EAR. IT'S CONNECTED TO ME. WE WILL...KEEP IN TOUCH.
CAULIFLOWER EAR. HEH.
I CAN DETECT THE NEGLECTED CORN PLANT ON HER HANDS.

"SO I WILL SEE... TO DR. HEMSDALE."
LOLA.
LOLA.
LOLA.
WHAT THE HELL?
DID YOU LOOK? DID YOU CHECK BEHIND ALL THE CLOTHES?
REAL FUNNY. REAL DAMN FUNNY. BUT THAT'S DR. HEMSDALE TO YOU.
DID YOU CHECK BEHIND ALL THE CLOTHES? IN THE BOXES AT THE BACK?
AND I GOT MY HAZING BACK AT FORT JACKSON, TWENTY YEARS AGO.
SO, I HOPE YOU LIKE IT SPICY, JERKWAD.
PSSFT
YOU CAN NEVER LOOK IN ALL THE PLACES...
OH GOD.

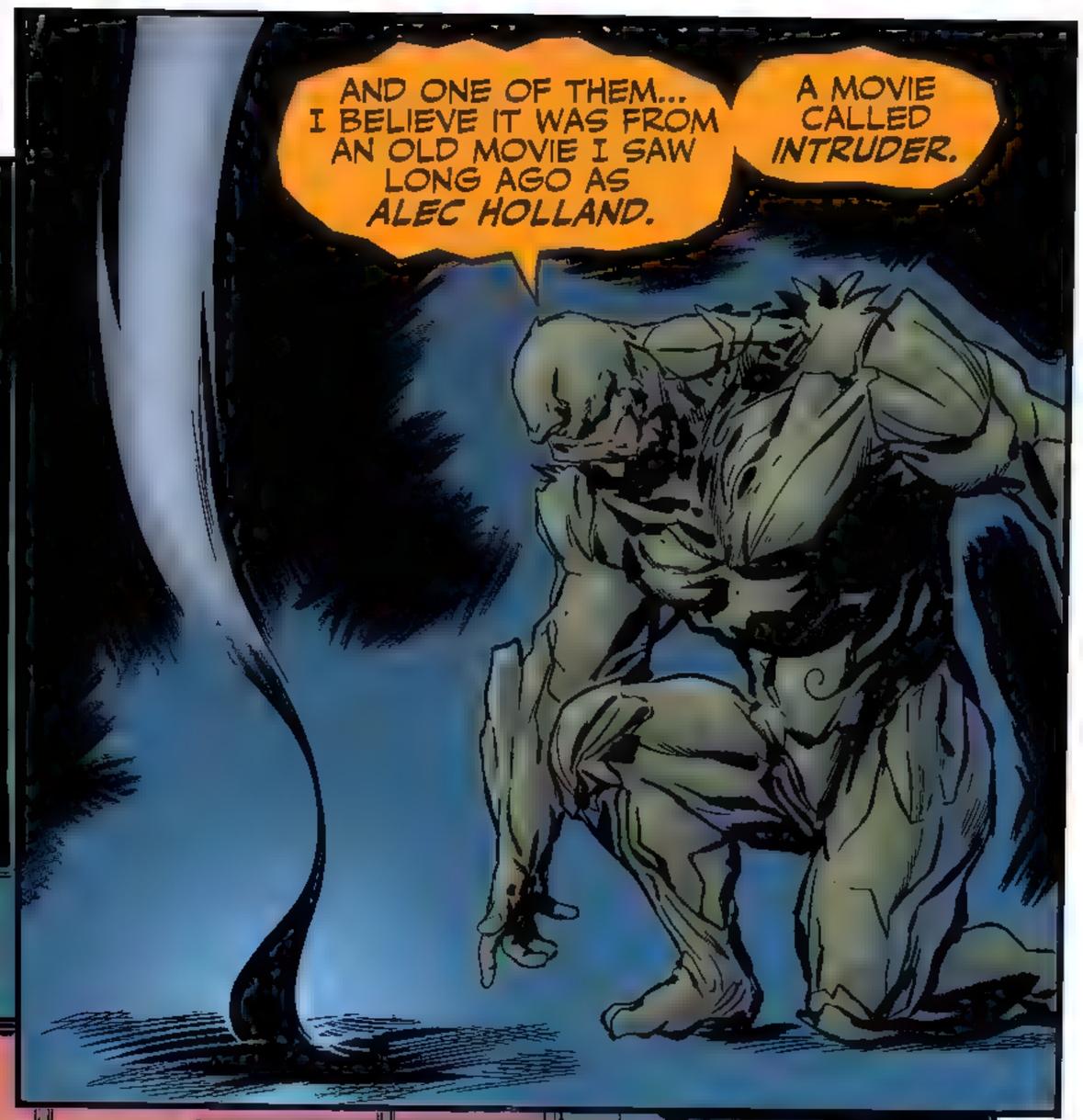
...THAT THE THING IN THE CLOSET CAN HIDE.
AHHHHHHHHH!
HM. THIS...
THIS I EXPECTED.
SEE? MORE MONSTERS. MONSTERS COMING OUT OF THE WOODWORK.
THEY'RE EVERYWHERE. ALL AROUND YOU.
THOM
HOW WILL YOU EVER SLEEP NOW?
DR. HEMSDALE! GO...NOW!
ARE YOU HE? ARE YOU THE BARREN? ANSWER ME!
KRK

THE BARREN IS SOMETHING.
I AM NOTHING...
...BUT A MEMORY.
WHAT--?

OH MY GOD. SCREW THIS. SCREW THIS SO MUCH--
EXECUTE ORDER. ORDER...
EXECUTE!
AHHH!
EXECUTE!
OH GOD OH GOD OH GOD...
SHRAGH

WHERE THE HELL--?!
IT'S GONE. DR. HEMSDALE. PLEASE... COME WITH ME. THERE IS SOMETHING STRANGE HERE...
DON'T YOU FRICKIN' TOUCH ME!
MORE MONSTERS. MONSTERS COMING OUT OF THE WOOD-WORK.
HHN!
AHHHHHHHH!
HCCCCH...
MONSTERS EVERYWHERE.
BRIAR.
HEMSDALE IS...GONE.
OH NOOOO! BUT SHE WAS SO NICE.

I FOLLOWED SINGH TO HIS OFFICE. BUT THEN HE DISAPPEARED, TOO. SO I LET MYSELF IN.
BRIAR. HEMSDALE WAS ATTACKED BY MONSTERS. STRANGE... CHILDISH CREATIONS.

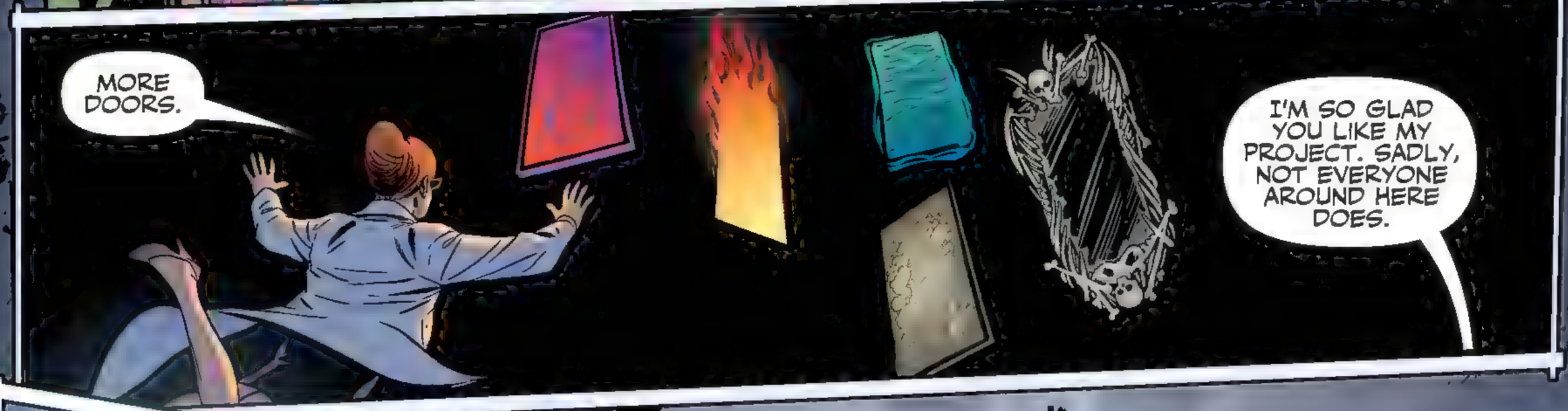

AND ONE OF THEM... I BELIEVE IT WAS FROM AN OLD MOVIE I SAW LONG AGO AS ALEC HOLLAND.
A MOVIE CALLED INTRUDER.

INTRUDER
YOU DON'T SAY.
I'LL COME TO YOU. STAY WHERE YOU ARE.

BUT SINGH CAME IN, AND DISAPPEARED. HE HAD TO HAVE SOME KIND OF TRAP DOOR...

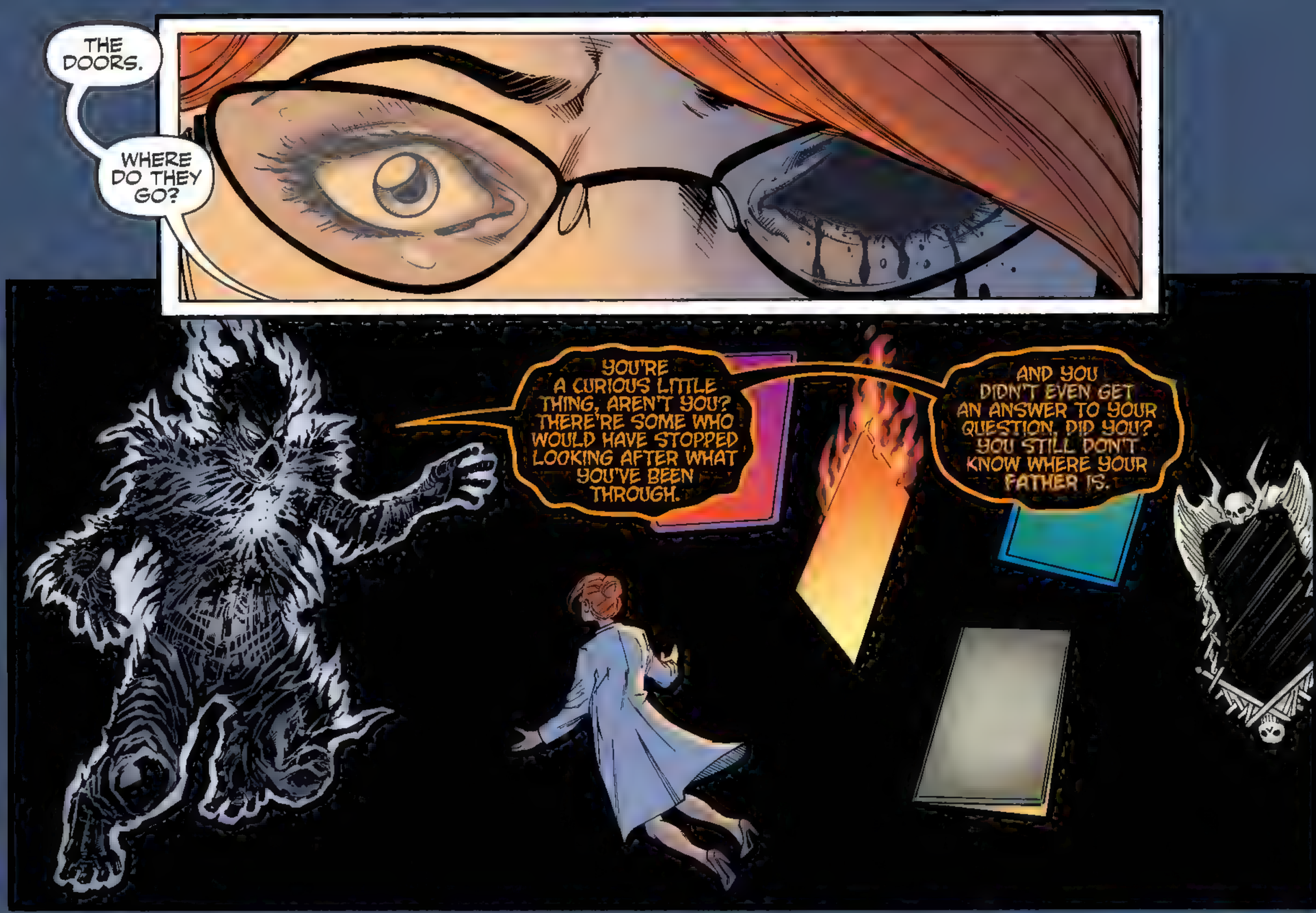
AND YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT DOORS.
HM.
BRIAR! DO NOT!

THERE. MY WITCH-EYE SHOWED ME. I SEE IT.
SORRY. I HAVE TO KNOW, SWAMPY.

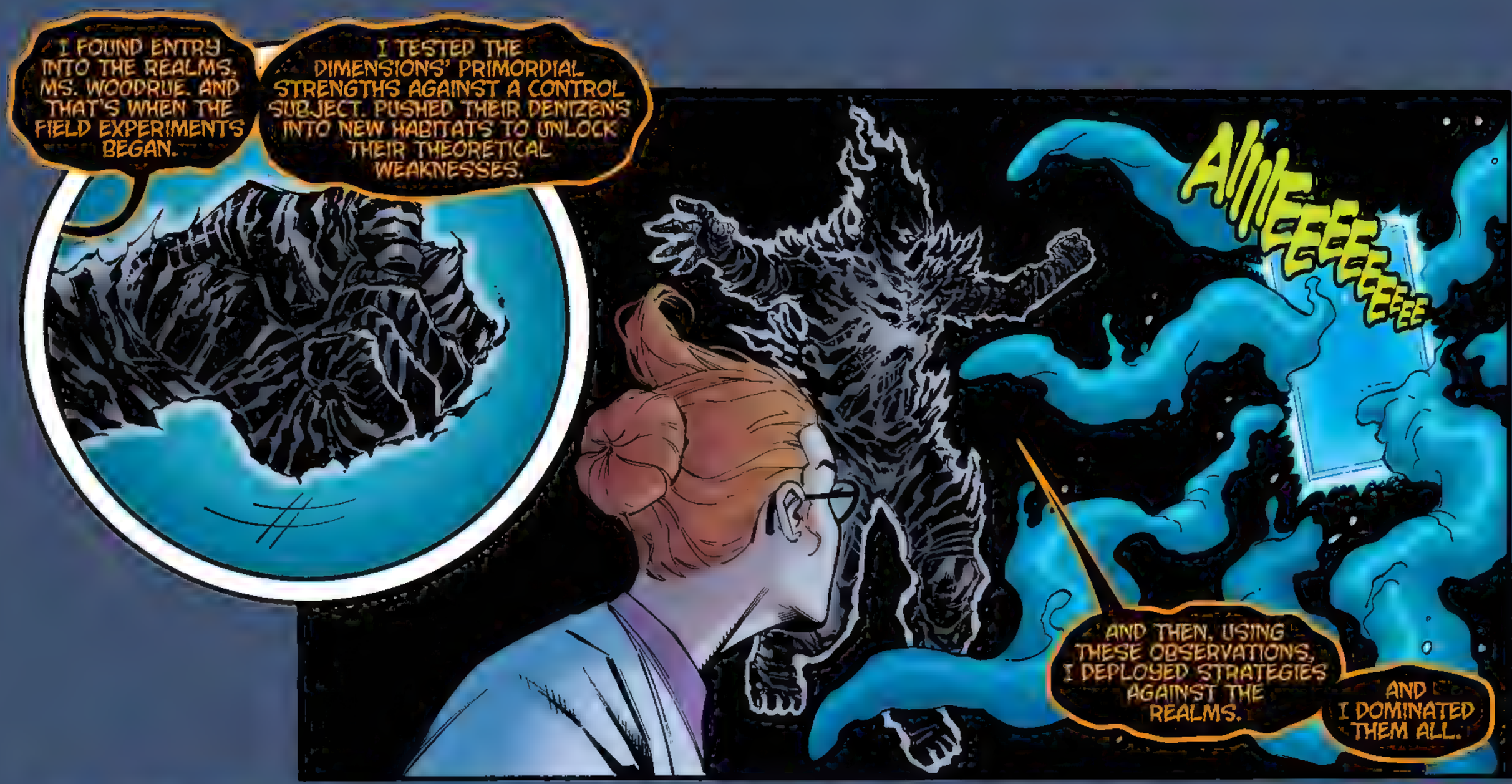


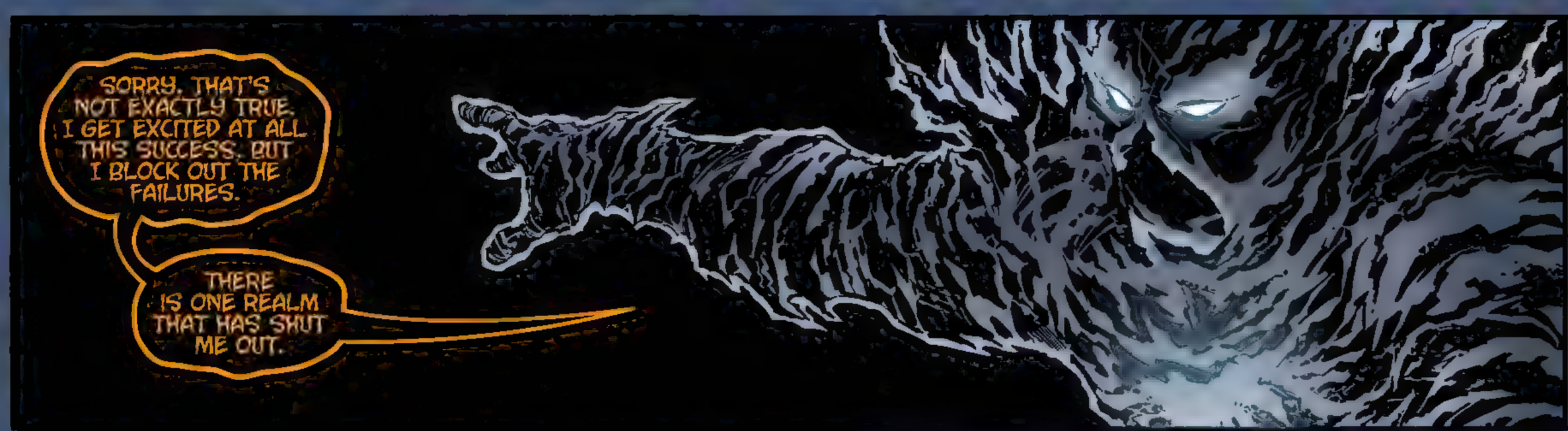
NEXT! A BARREN WORLD.

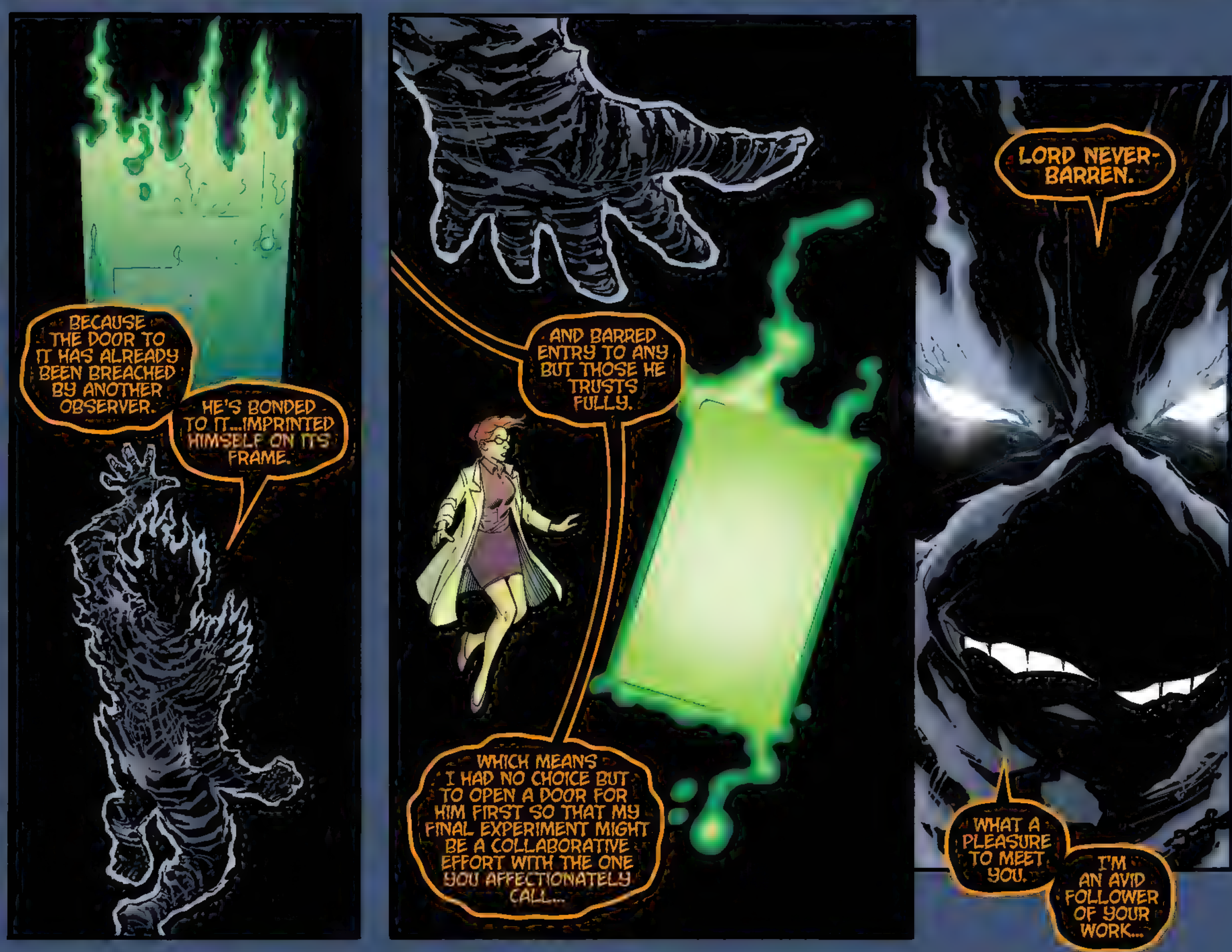
A DOOR. A SIMPLE LABORATORY DOOR WITHIN THE METAL AND PLASTER LABYRINTH OF OAKHEART NATIONAL LABORATORY.
IT'S AN AMALGAM OF WOODS... COMPOSED OF A THIN VENEER OF BLACK WALNUT OVER A HARDBOARD INTERIOR MADE UP OF THE COMBINED, PRESSED CORPSES OF A HUNDRED DIFFERENT TREES, MULCHED AND FUSED WITH CHEMICAL GLUE.
KRAK
THOUGH LONG DEAD, IT THROWS ITS BODY BEFORE MY FIST, ATTEMPTING TO KEEP ME FROM MY OBJECTIVE.
ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS SILENT, LIFELESS GUARDIAN IS MY PARTNER...MY FRIEND, THE WITCH BRIAR WOODRUE. SHE'S HELD CAPTIVE BY SOME UNKNOWN HORROR. THOSE WHO FEAR IT CALL IT THE BARREN.
KRAK
KRAK
BUT NO OBSTACLE, NO UNKNOWN HORROR...NOTHING WILL STAND IN THE WAY...
...OF THE SWAMP THING.
KRAKOOM
The OBSERVER EFFECT
PART TWO
TIM SEELEY WRITER
AARON LOPRESTI ARTIST
TRISH MULVIHILL COLORS
DAVE SHARPE LETTERS
LIZ ERICKSON ASST. EDITOR
MARIE JAVINS EDITOR


THE DOORS.
WHERE DO THEY GO?
YOU'RE A CURIOUS LITTLE THING, AREN'T YOU? THERE'RE SOME WHO WOULD HAVE STOPPED LOOKING AFTER WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH.
AND YOU DIDN'T EVEN GET AN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION, DID YOU? YOU STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE YOUR FATHER IS.

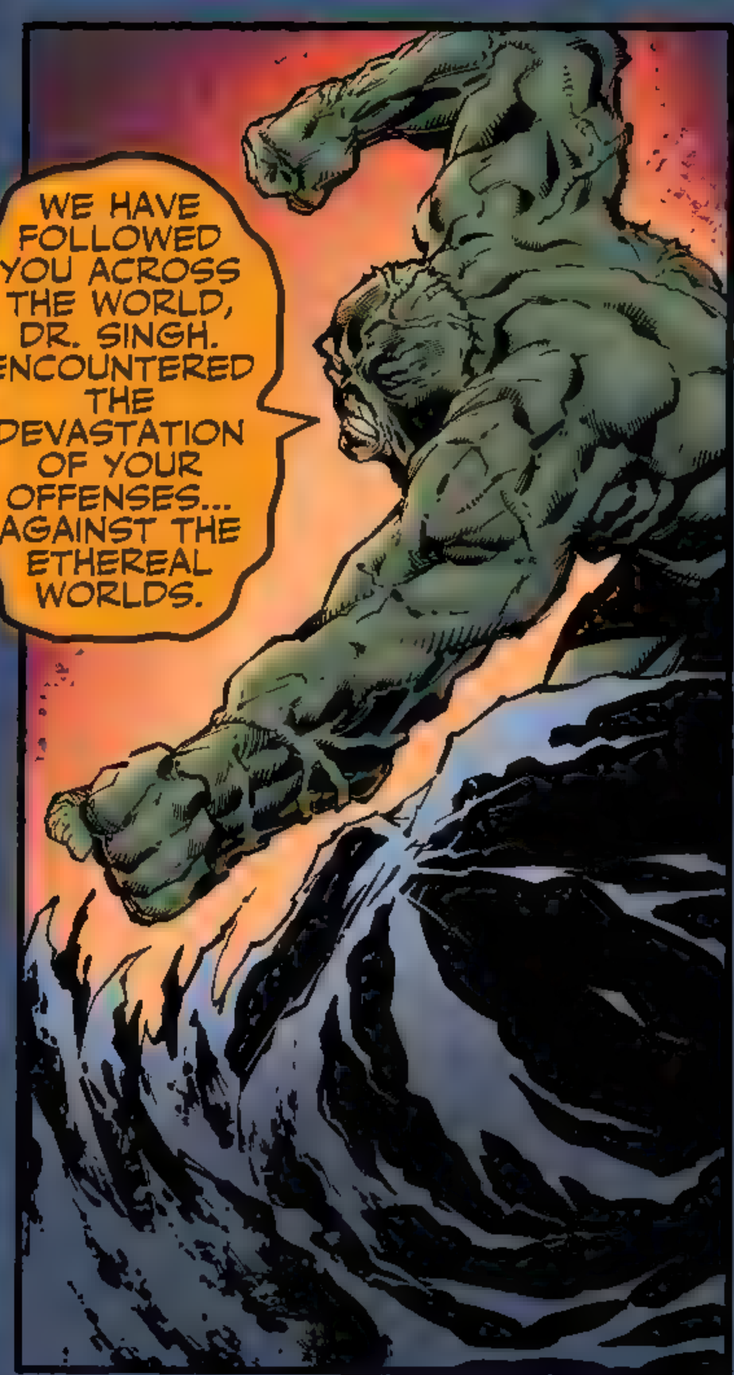
NOT TO BE A JERK, BUT I GOT AN ANSWER TO MY QUESTIONS.
SO MY EVERY INQUISITION YIELDED INDISPUTABLE FACTS ABOUT THE NATURE OF ALL THINGS. CAN I SHARE THEM WITH YOU, MS. WOODRUE?
Y-YES.
THESE DOORS LEAD TO THE ELEMENTAL REALMS. THE MANIFESTED POCKET UNIVERSES OF WATER, FIRE, LIFE, LIMBO AND DEATH.
THE METAPHYSICAL SOURCES OF EXISTENT MATTER...
AND ALL OF THE IMMENSE POWER CONTAINED WITHIN.
SHRRRRRRR
YOU'VE MET OTHER AVATARS, AS I UNDERSTAND IT. BLACK BI'TAL AND OTHERS, YES?


I FOUND ENTRY INTO THE REALMS, MS. WOODRUE. AND THAT'S WHEN THE FIELD EXPERIMENTS BEGAN.
I TESTED THE DIMENSIONS' PRIMORDIAL STRENGTHS AGAINST A CONTROL SUBJECT. PUSHED THEIR DENIZEN'S INTO NEW HABITATS TO UNLOCK THEIR THEORETICAL WEAKNESSES.
ALIIIEEEEEEEEEE
AND THEN, USING THESE OBSERVATIONS, I DEPLOYED STRATEGIES AGAINST THE REALMS.
AND I DOMINATED THEM ALL.

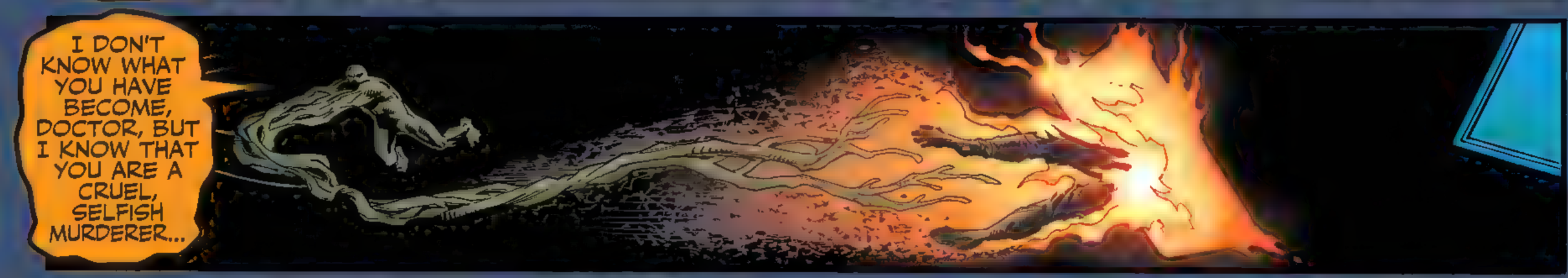

SORRY, THAT'S NOT EXACTLY TRUE. I GET EXCITED AT ALL THIS SUCCESS, BUT I BLOCK OUT THE FAILURES.
THERE IS ONE REALM THAT HAS SHUT ME OUT.


BECAUSE THE DOOR TO IT HAS ALREADY BEEN BREACHED BY ANOTHER OBSERVER.
HE'S BONDED TO IT...IMPRINTED HIMSELF ON ITS FRAME.
AND BARRED ENTRY TO ANY BUT THOSE HE TRUSTS FULLY.
WHICH MEANS I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO OPEN A DOOR FOR HIM FIRST SO THAT MY FINAL EXPERIMENT MIGHT BE A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT WITH THE ONE YOU AFFECTIONATELY CALL...
LORD NEVER-BARREN.
WHAT A PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.
I'M AN AVID FOLLOWER OF YOUR WORK...

...DR. HOLLAND.
GRRAAAAAAHH!


WE HAVE FOLLOWED YOU ACROSS THE WORLD, DR. SINGH. ENCOUNTERED THE DEVASTATION OF YOUR OFFENSES... AGAINST THE ETHEREAL WORLDS.

AND I HAVE SEEN WITH MY EYES...BEINGS CREATED FROM DARKNESS AND HATE DESTROY THE WOMAN WHO YOU PERCEIVED...HAD SLIGHTED YOU.


I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE BECOME, DOCTOR, BUT I KNOW THAT YOU ARE A CRUEL, SELFISH MURDERER...

AHHH!
AND I HAVE NO INTEREST...IN ANYTHING YOU HAVE TO SAY.

--HE DANGLED IT IN FRONT OF ME SO I'D BRING YOU TO HIM!

AS I WAS SAYING, ALEC...

I'M A FAN. VERY BIG. THE **BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA** YOU INVENTED WAS AN EXAMPLE OF SCIENTIFIC MASTERY AND COMPASSION.

PERSONALLY, I WASN'T THE INVENTIVE TYPE OF SCIENTIST. MORE OF A RECORDER. I'M NOT CREATIVE IF I'M BEING HONEST. THE ONLY THINGS I COULD IMAGINE AS A KID WERE THINGS TO BE AFRAID OF...

...MONSTERS IN THE CLOSET. KILLER ROBOTS. ALIEN INVADERS.

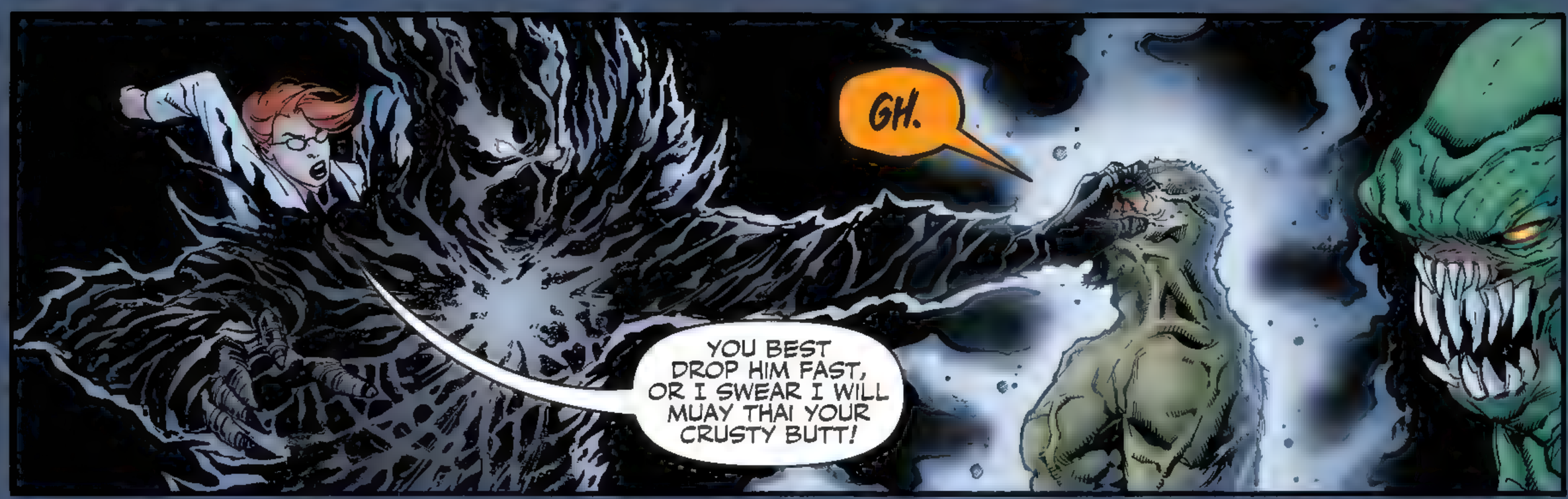
THE FEARFUL UNKNOWN.

I WANT YOU TO RECALL SOMETHING FOR ME, OKAY, ALEC? IT'S IMPORTANT TO THE NEXT PART OF THE EXPERIMENT.

SWAMPY!

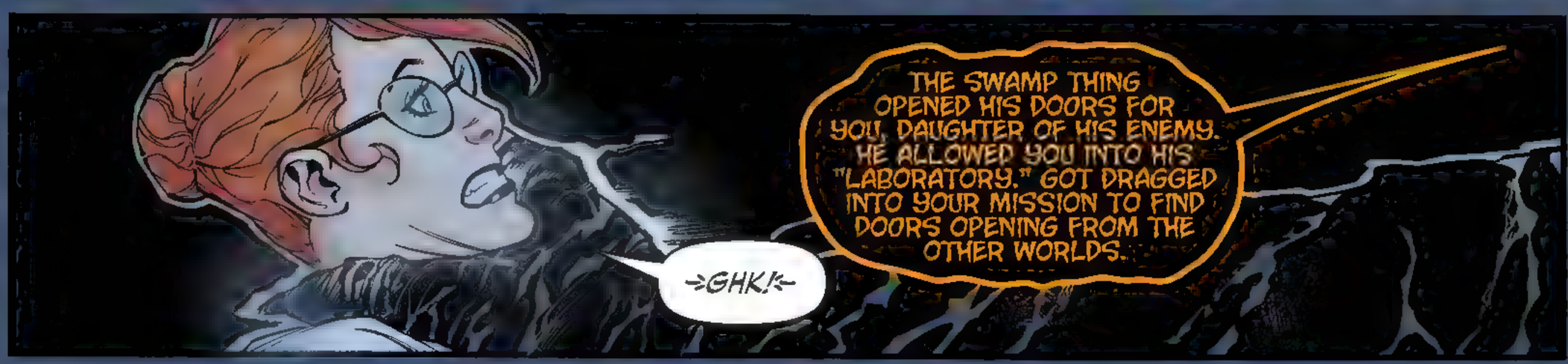
AHHH!

"NOT LONG AGO, YOU'D DECIDED TO RETREAT FROM THE WORLD OF HUMANITY.
"TOO MANY ENEMIES TRYING TO USE YOU FOR YOUR POWERS. TOO MANY CAPED CRUSADERS AND THEIR HUMAN MORALS.
"TOO MANY RELATIONSHIPS TURNED TO HEARTBREAK.
"AND SO YOU RETREATED TO THE LOUISIANA BAYOU YOU'D COME TO CALL HOME SINCE YOU'D HAD YOUR LAB THERE.
"AND YOU SEALED IT AWAY FROM THE PHYSICAL WORLD WITH THE POWER OF THE GREEN YOU COMMANDED.
"AND THEN, A VISITOR AT THE GATES.
"A YOUNG WITCH, LOOKING FOR DOORS TO THE OTHER WORLDS, SO THAT SHE MIGHT DISCOVER THE WHEREABOUTS OF HER FATHER.
"USING WHAT FEW SPELLS SHE KNEW, SHE LATCHED ONTO THE THREADS OF GREEN MAGICK IN THE MISTS OF YOUR SWAMP AND CAST HER DIVINATION SPELL INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE UNDERVERSE.
"SHE SAW IMAGES SO HORRIBLE THAT THEY LEFT HER CATATONIC AND SUSCEPTIBLE TO SOMETHING ELSE SHE'D UNLEASHED.
"AND SO YOU LEFT YOUR EXILE, ALEC, TO RESCUE BRIAR WOODRUE FROM A DEMON.
"YOU SAVED HER FROM THE THINGS SHE HAD SEEN, AND WHAT SHE HAD LEARNED, HELPING HER REMOVE AN EYE TAINTED BY THE POISON OF THE DARKEST MAGICKS."

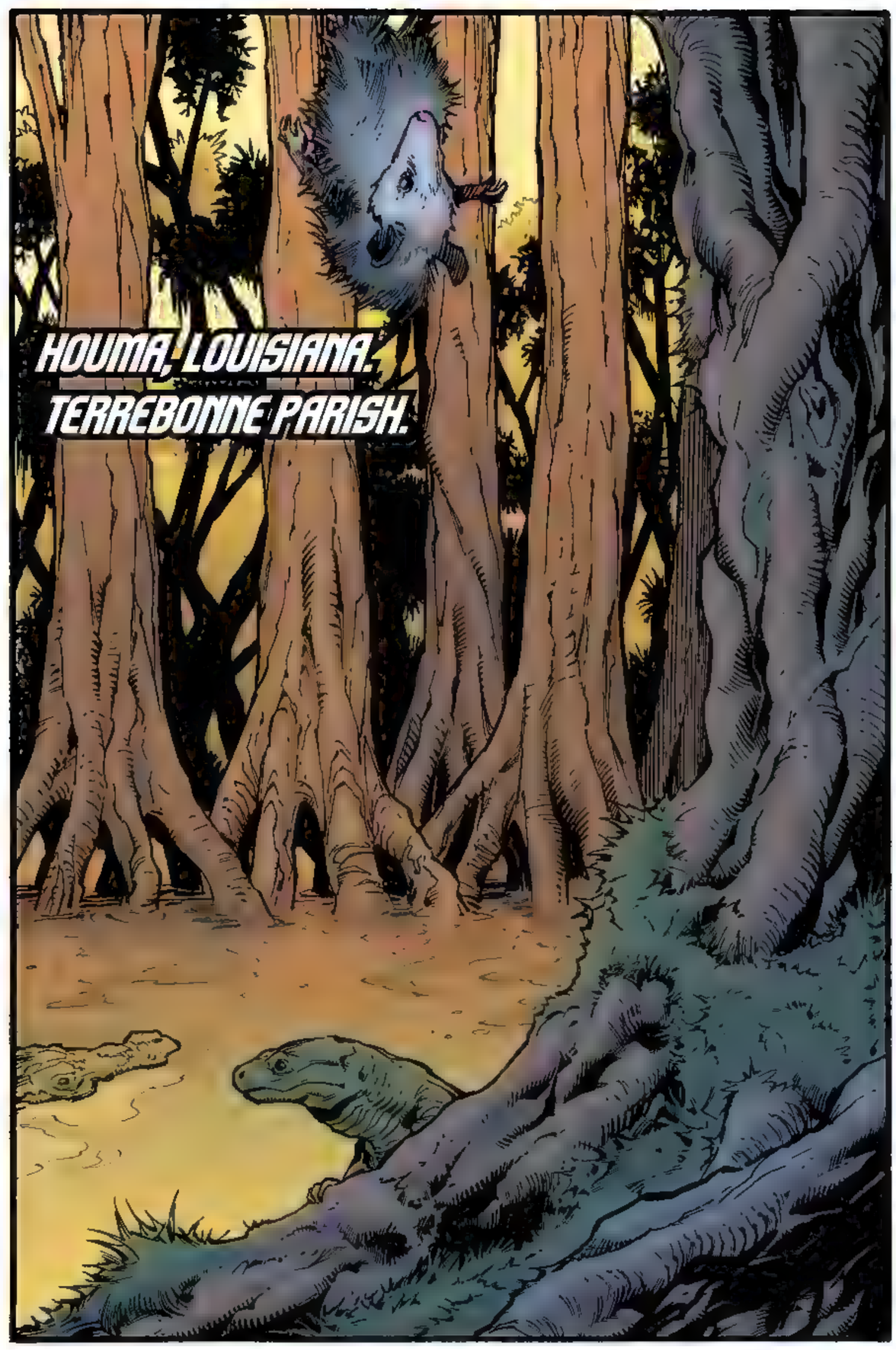

GH.
YOU BEST DROP HIM FAST, OR I SWEAR I WILL MUAY THAI YOUR CRUSTY BUTT!

THE MOST INTERESTING PART, TO ME, IS THAT YOU KNEW THE WHOLE TIME JASON WOODRUE WAS IN THE DEEPEST DEPTHS OF HELL.
BECAUSE YOU SENT HIM THERE, DR. HOLLAND.

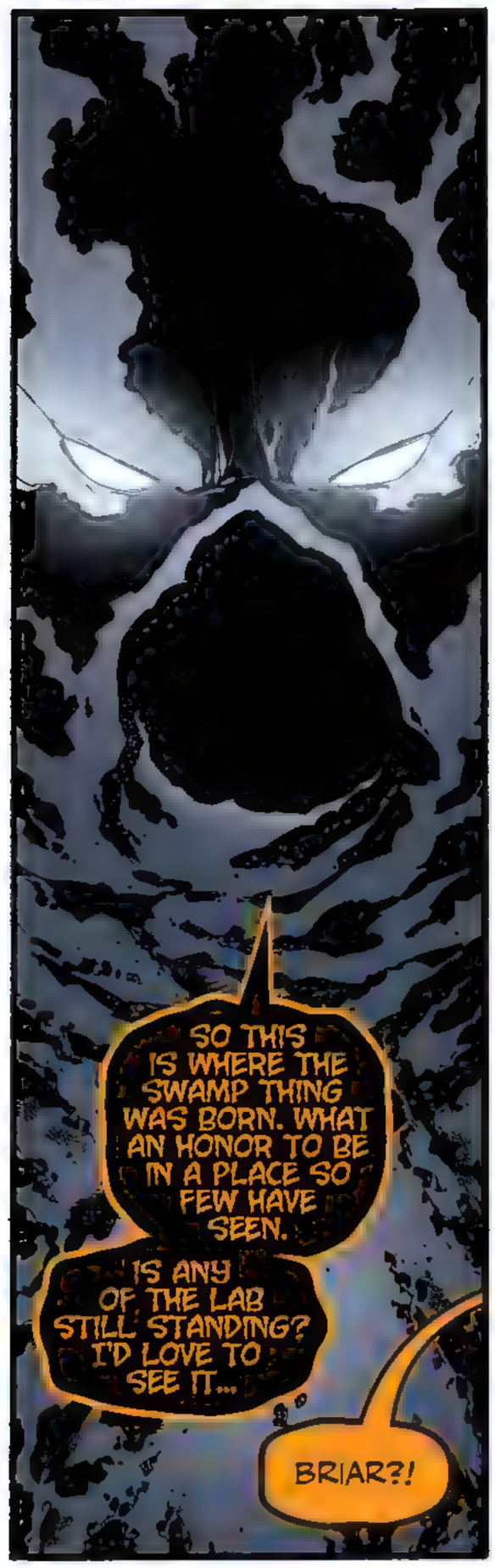
WAIT... WHAT--?
IT'S VERIFIABLY TRUE, AND THAT IS WHY I NEED YOU, TOO.


THE SWAMP THING OPENED HIS DOORS FOR YOU, DAUGHTER OF HIS ENEMY. HE ALLOWED YOU INTO HIS "LABORATORY." GOT DRAGGED INTO YOUR MISSION TO FIND DOORS OPENING FROM THE OTHER WORLDS.
->GHK!<-

YOUR AFFECTION FOR DOORS IS APPROPRIATE. BECAUSE YOU, BRIAR WOODRUE...
...ARE A KEY.

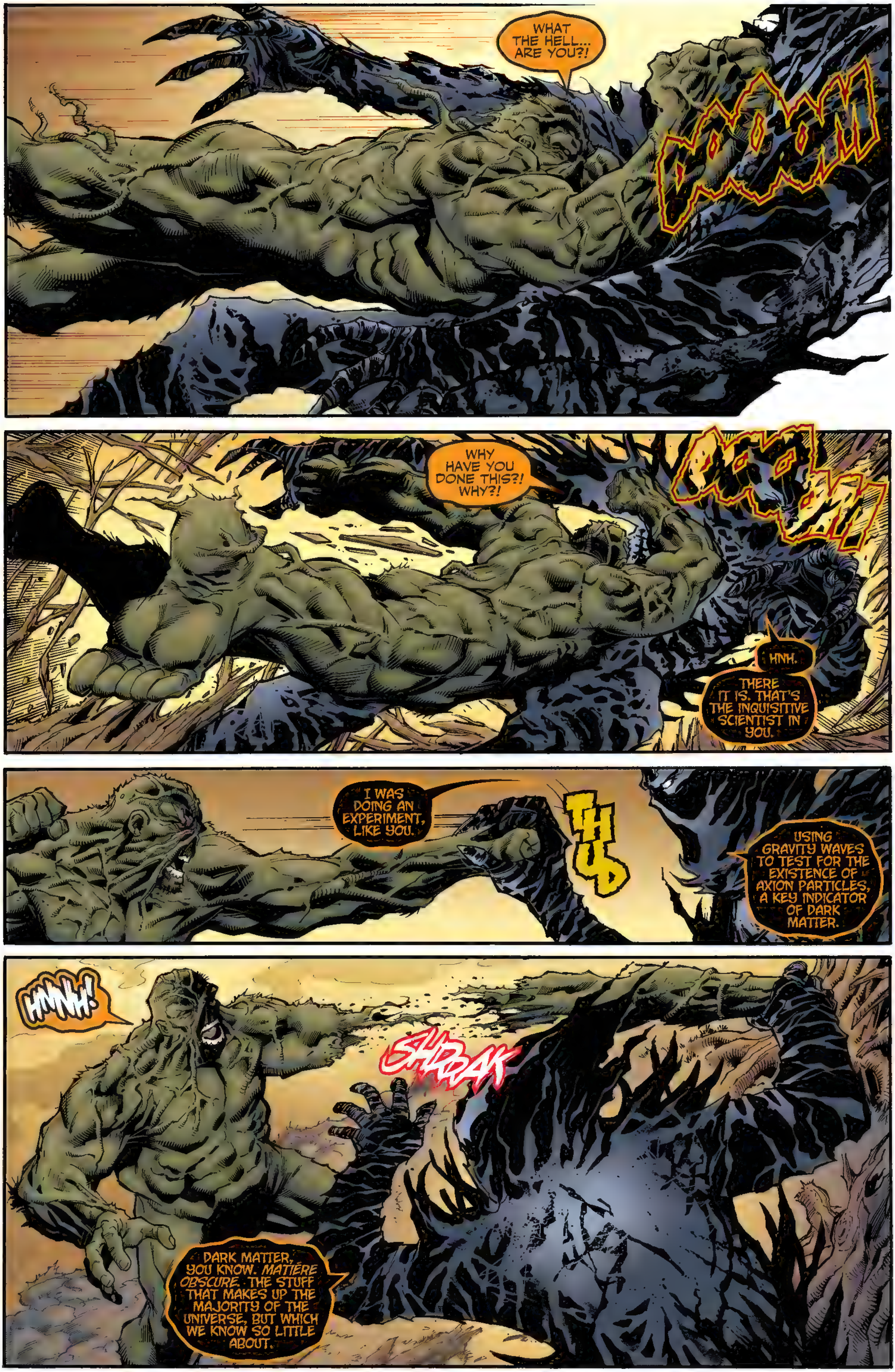

HOUMA, LOUISIANA.
TERREBONNE PARISH.

BAM
BOM


SO THIS IS WHERE THE SWAMP THING WAS BORN. WHAT AN HONOR TO BE IN A PLACE SO FEW HAVE SEEN.
IS ANY OF THE LAB STILL STANDING? I'D LOVE TO SEE IT...
BRIAR?!

HOW IS SHE?
FORCED INTRINSIC-FIELD MERGINGS LIKE THAT CAN BE STRESSFUL ON HUMAN BODIES.

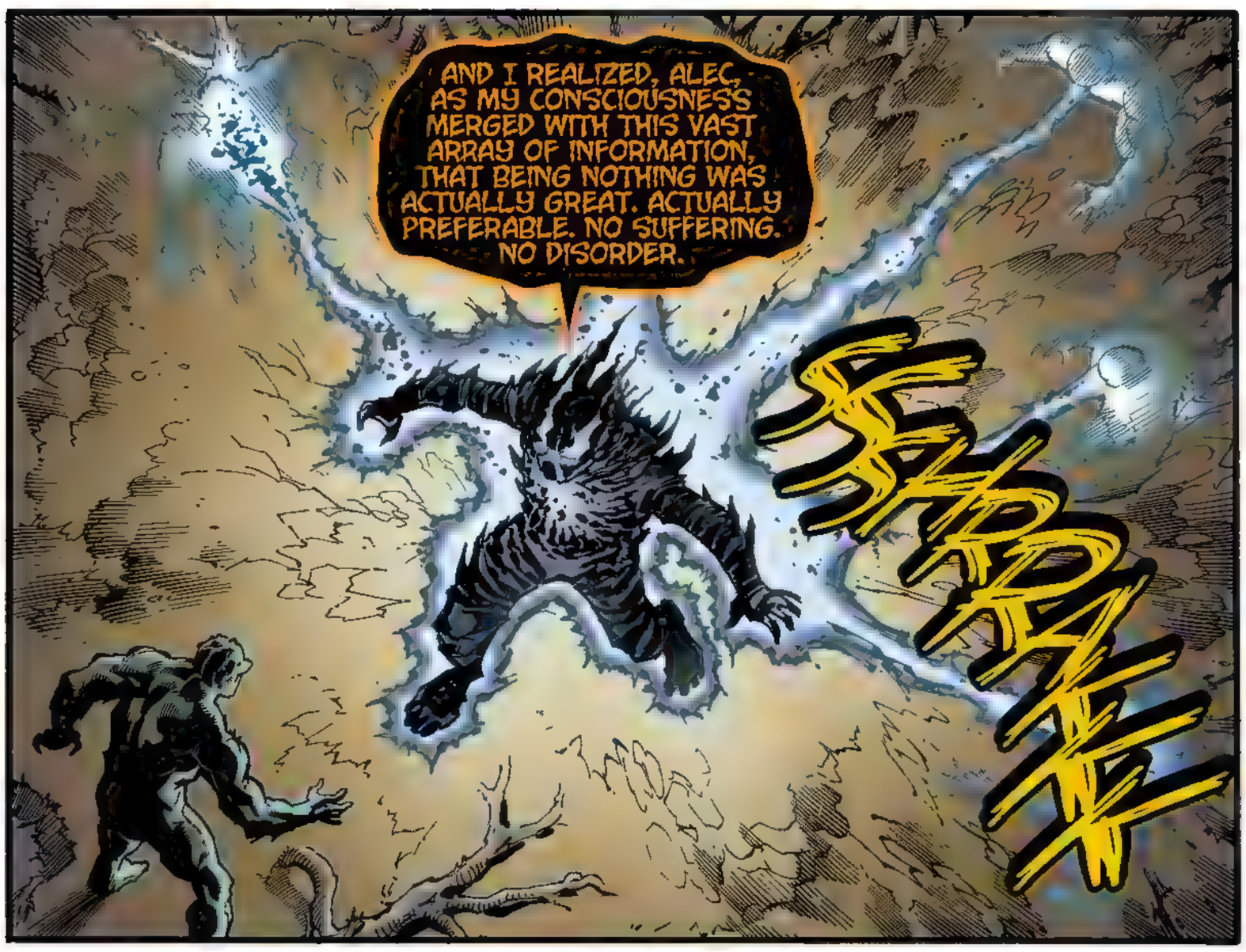
SHE'S... DEAD.


WHAT THE HELL... ARE YOU?!
WHY HAVE YOU DONE THIS?! WHY?!
HNH.
THERE IT IS. THAT'S THE INQUISITIVE SCIENTIST IN YOU.
I WAS DOING AN EXPERIMENT, LIKE YOU.
THUD
USING GRAVITY WAVES TO TEST FOR THE EXISTENCE OF AXION PARTICLES, A KEY INDICATOR OF DARK MATTER.
HMMH!
SHRAK
DARK MATTER, YOU KNOW. *MATIÈRE OBSCURE*. THE STUFF THAT MAKES UP THE MAJORITY OF THE UNIVERSE, BUT WHICH WE KNOW SO LITTLE ABOUT.

I WAS GETTING NOWHERE. LAUGHED AT BY MY LEAD. IN CONSTANT DANGER OF BEING FIRED.
AND I WAS MISERABLE IN MY LIFE. I HAD NOTHING. I FELT LIKE NOTHING. A ZERO.

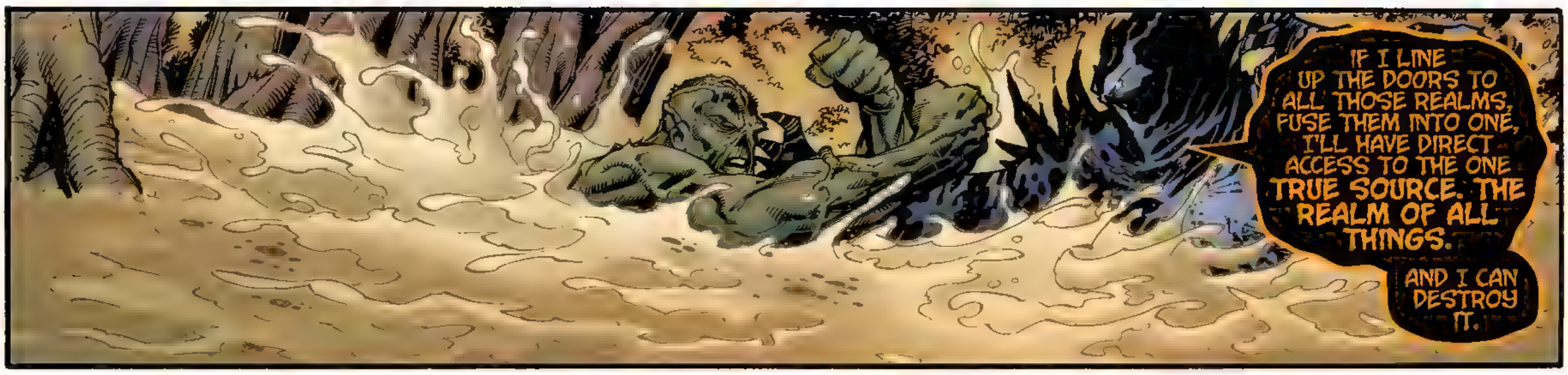
SO I DID IT. I THREW MYSELF INTO THE MAGNETIC CHAMBER. I FIGURED THE SUPERCOOLING WOULD DO ME IN QUICK. AND I COULD EXPERIENCE THE NOTHING I HAD ALWAYS FELT. BUT SOMETHING HAPPENED...
IT'S MUCH TOO COMPLEX FOR A BIOLOGIST, I'M SURE...
SO LET'S JUST SAY MY BODY WAS ANNIHILATED BUT THE INFORMATION WE CALL MY MIND WENT ALONG WITH THE GRAVITY WAVES.

IN LAY TERMS, IT WAS IMPRINTED ON THE DARK MATTER.


AND I REALIZED, ALEC, AS MY CONSCIOUSNESS MERGED WITH THIS VAST ARRAY OF INFORMATION, THAT BEING NOTHING WAS ACTUALLY GREAT. ACTUALLY PREFERABLE. NO SUFFERING. NO DISORDER.
SHRIEK

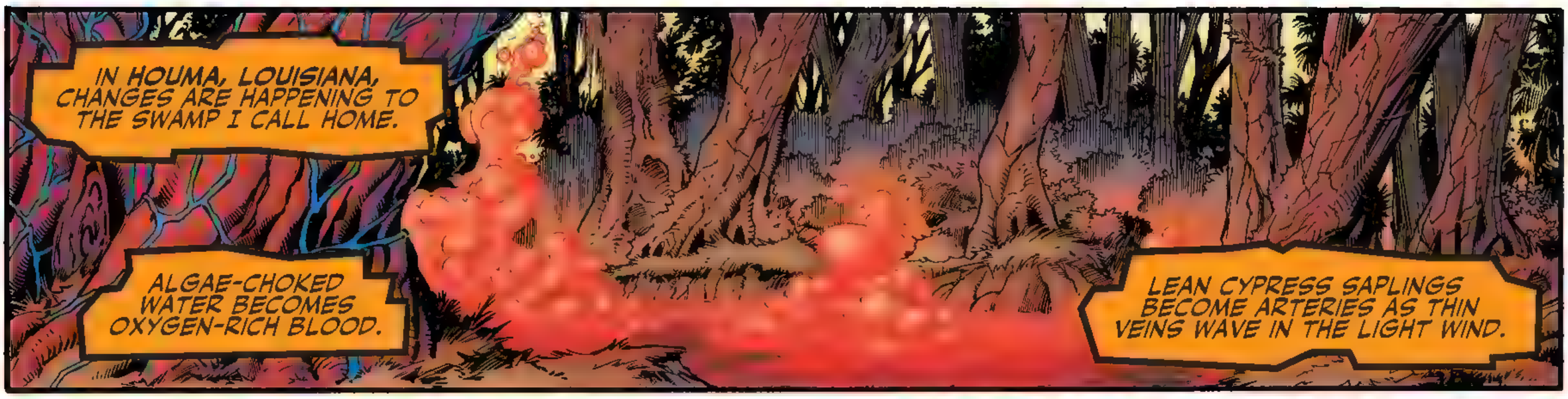
AS SENTIENTS, WE COMPLICATE EVERYTHING. MAKE IT MESSY. MAKE IT UGLY.

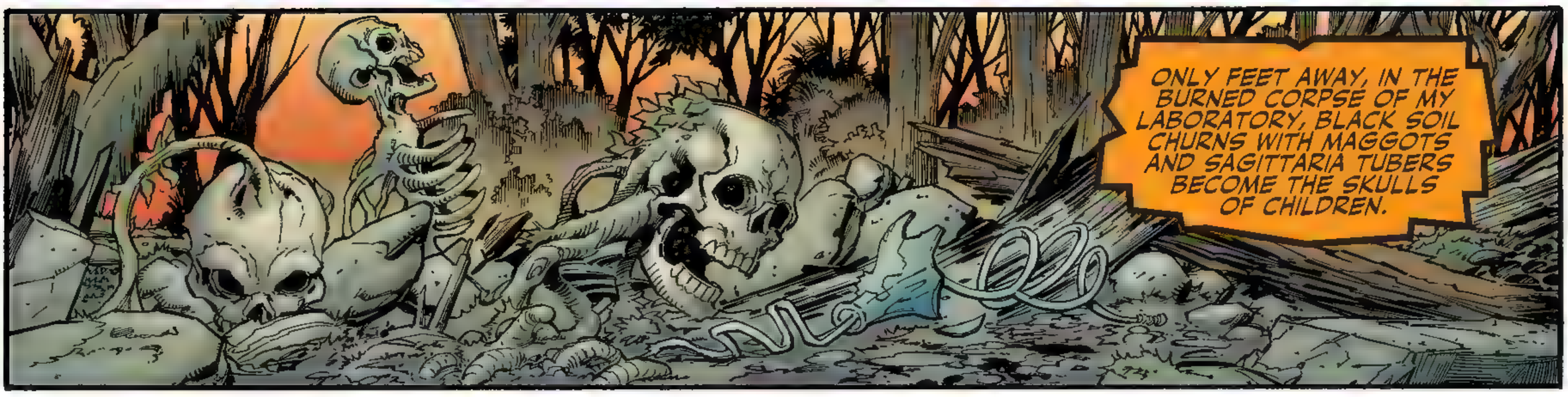
IT HAS TO GO, ALEC. EXISTENT MATTER AND ENERGY. FIRE, WATER, LIFE, DEATH AND EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN.
IT ALL NEEDS TO BE ZERO. NOTHING.

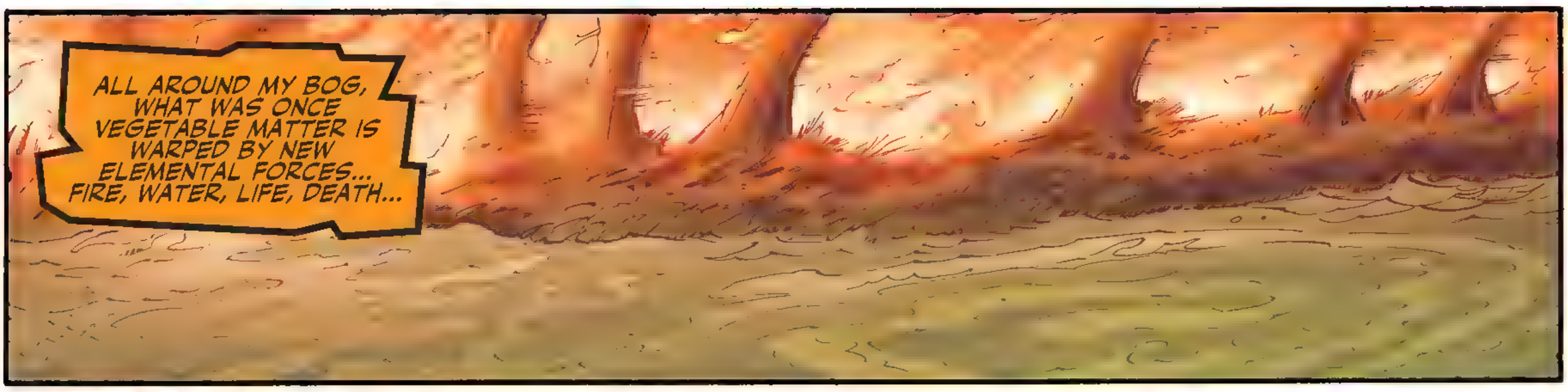

IF I LINE UP THE DOORS TO ALL THOSE REALMS, FUSE THEM INTO ONE, I'LL HAVE DIRECT ACCESS TO THE ONE TRUE SOURCE. THE REALM OF ALL THINGS.
AND I CAN DESTROY IT.

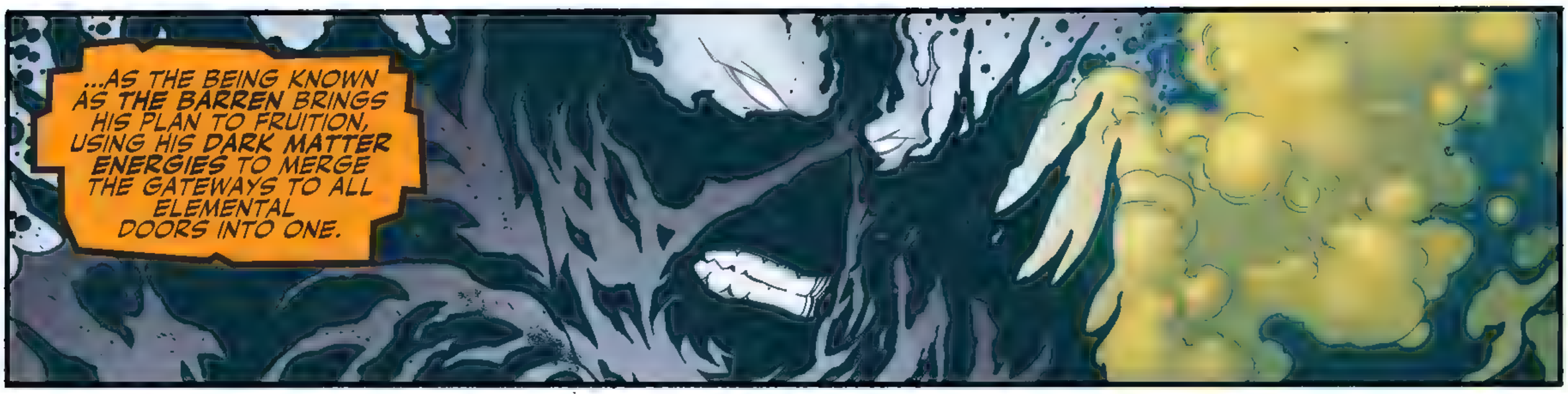
ALL I NEED IS ONE MORE DOOR. THE ONE TO THE GREEN. THE ONE ONLY YOU CAN ACCESS.
BECAUSE YOU'RE JUST LIKE ME, ALEC.

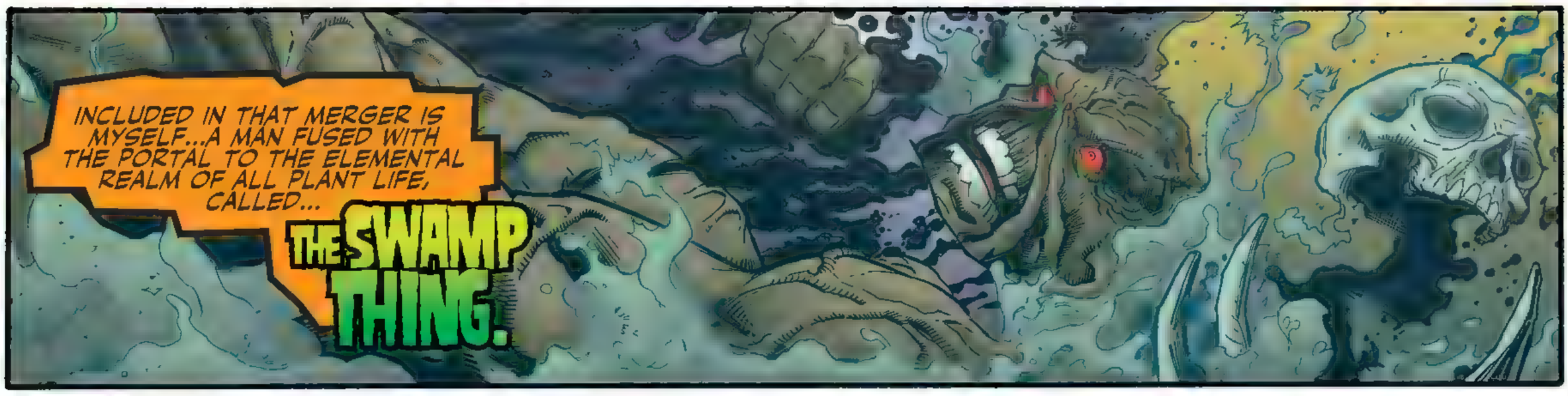
YOU'RE A DEAD MAN, IMPRINTED ON A FORCE.
A MEMORY OF PAIN, THIRSTING FOR REVENGE.
NEXT: WHAT LIES BENEATH!

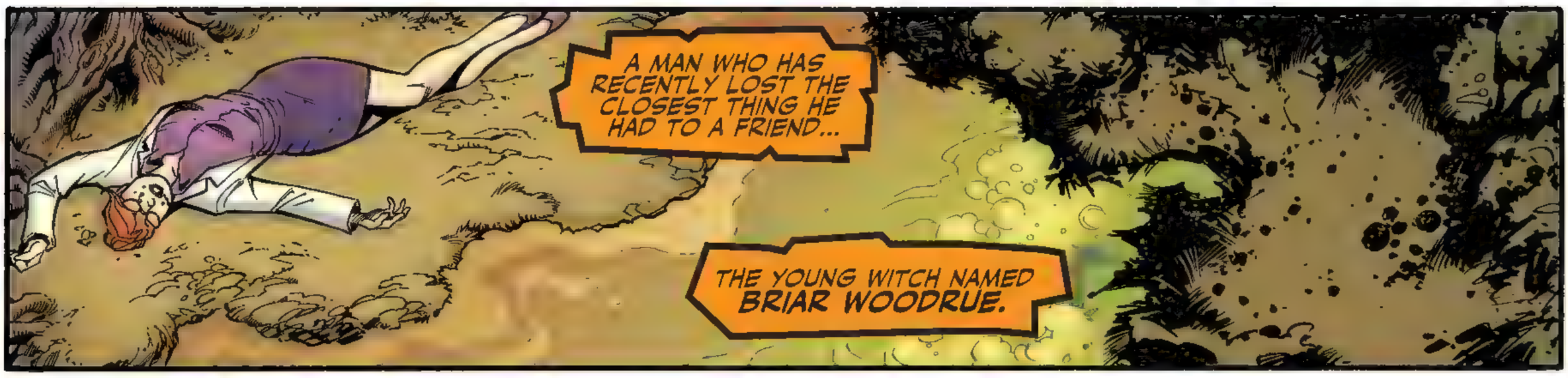

IN HOUMA, LOUISIANA, CHANGES ARE HAPPENING TO THE SWAMP I CALL HOME.
ALGAE-CHOKED WATER BECOMES OXYGEN-RICH BLOOD.
LEAN CYPRESS SAPLINGS BECOME ARTERIES AS THIN VEINS WAVE IN THE LIGHT WIND.

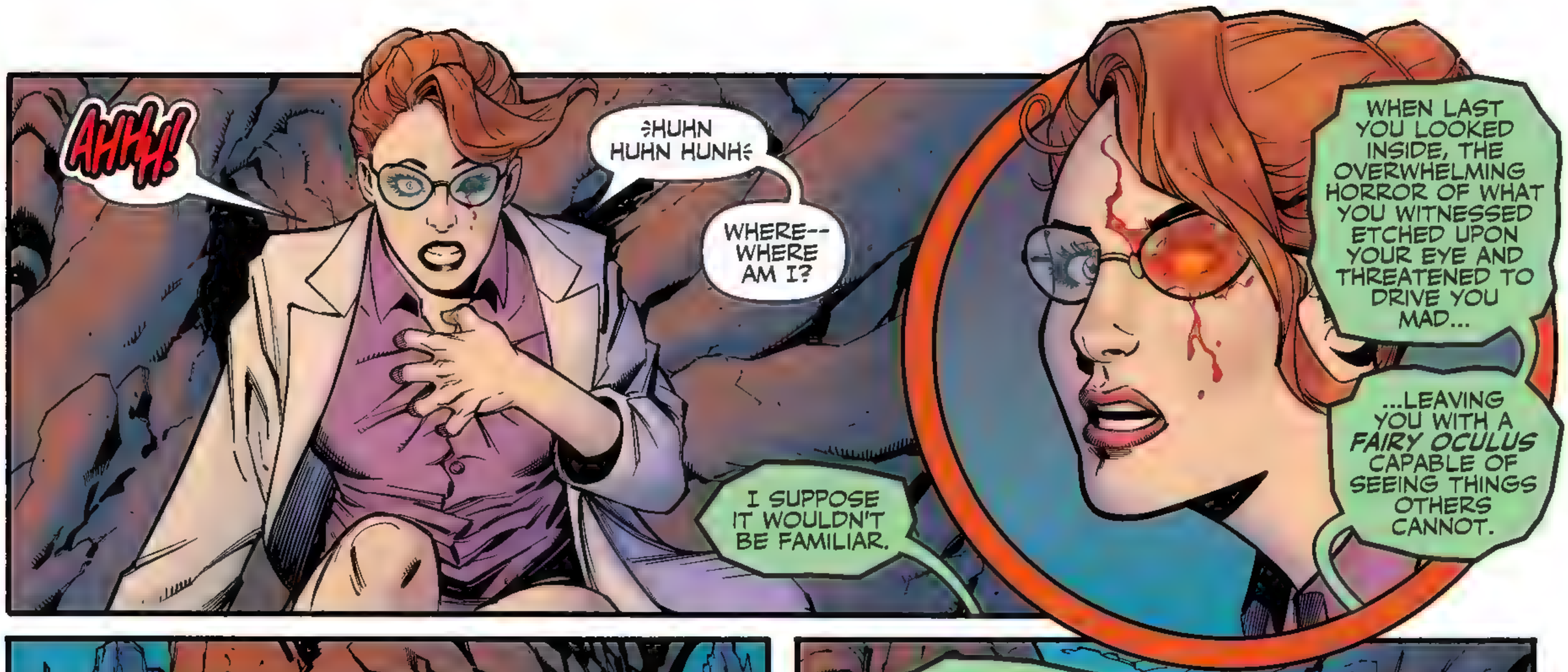

ONLY FEET AWAY, IN THE BURNED CORPSE OF MY LABORATORY, BLACK SOIL CHURNS WITH MAGGOTS AND SAGITTARIA TUBERS BECOME THE SKULLS OF CHILDREN.

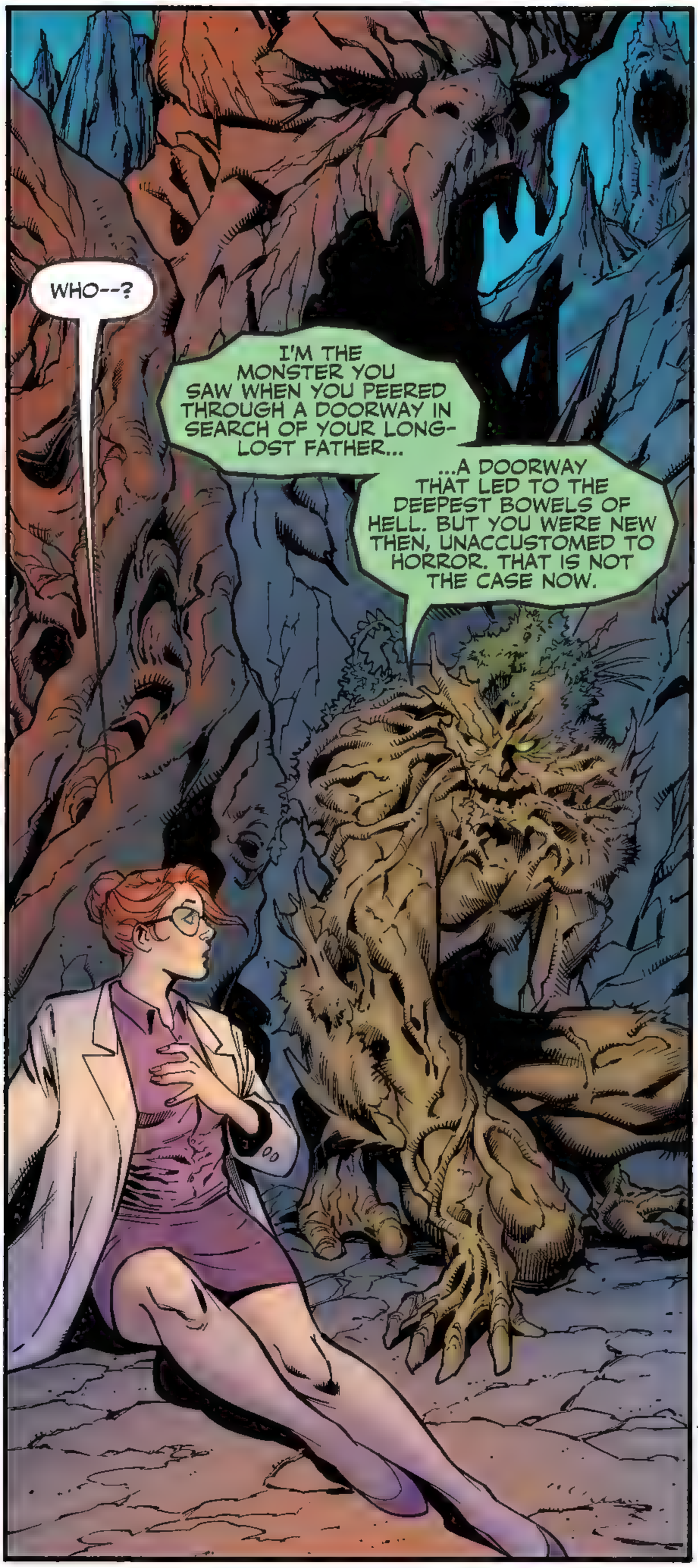

ALL AROUND MY BOG, WHAT WAS ONCE VEGETABLE MATTER IS WARPED BY NEW ELEMENTAL FORCES... FIRE, WATER, LIFE, DEATH...

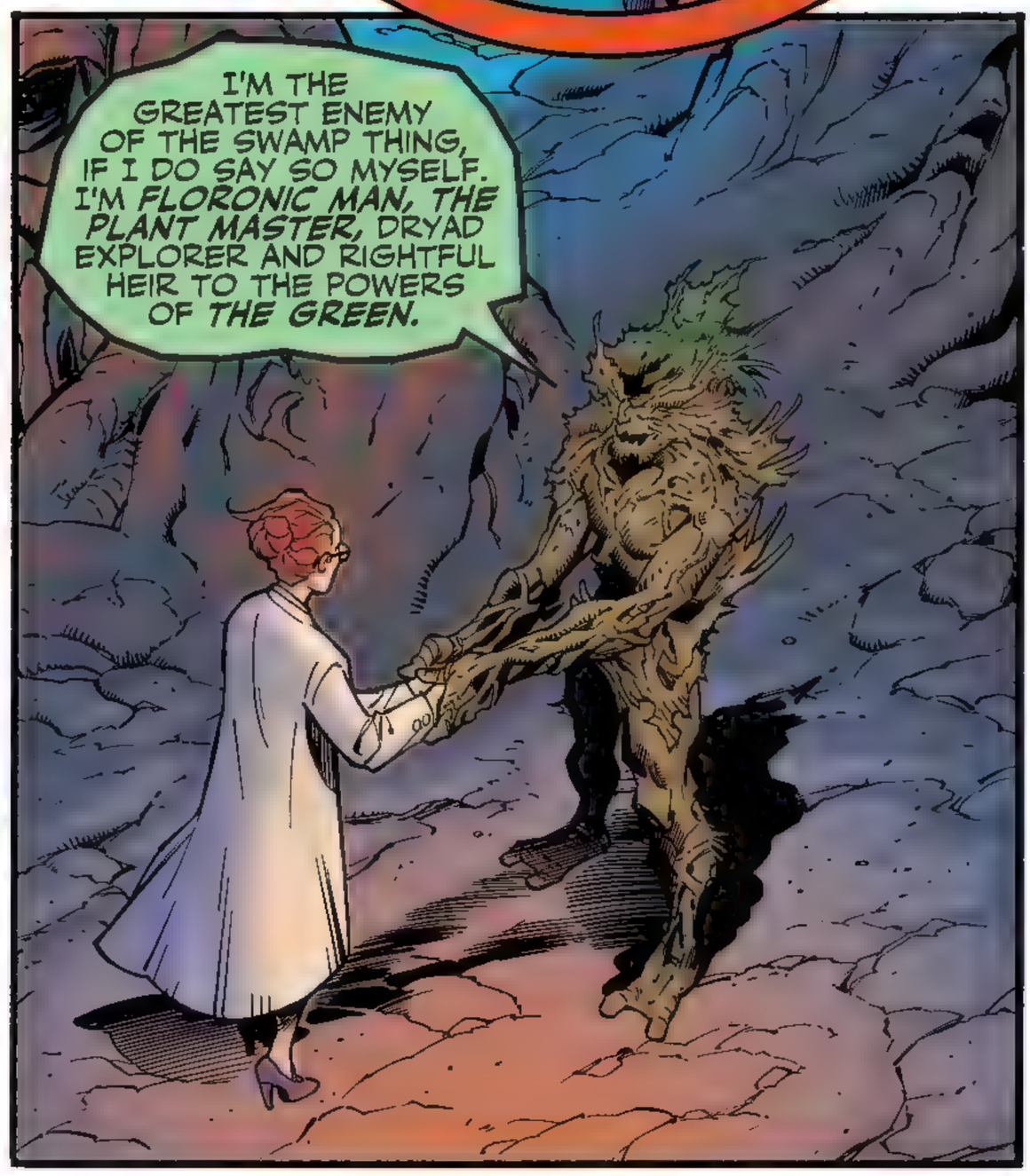

...AS THE BEING KNOWN AS THE BARREN BRINGS HIS PLAN TO FRUITION, USING HIS DARK MATTER ENERGIES TO MERGE THE GATEWAYS TO ALL ELEMENTAL DOORS INTO ONE.


INCLUDED IN THAT MERGER IS MYSELF...A MAN FUSED WITH THE PORTAL TO THE ELEMENTAL REALM OF ALL PLANT LIFE, CALLED...
THE SWAMP THING.

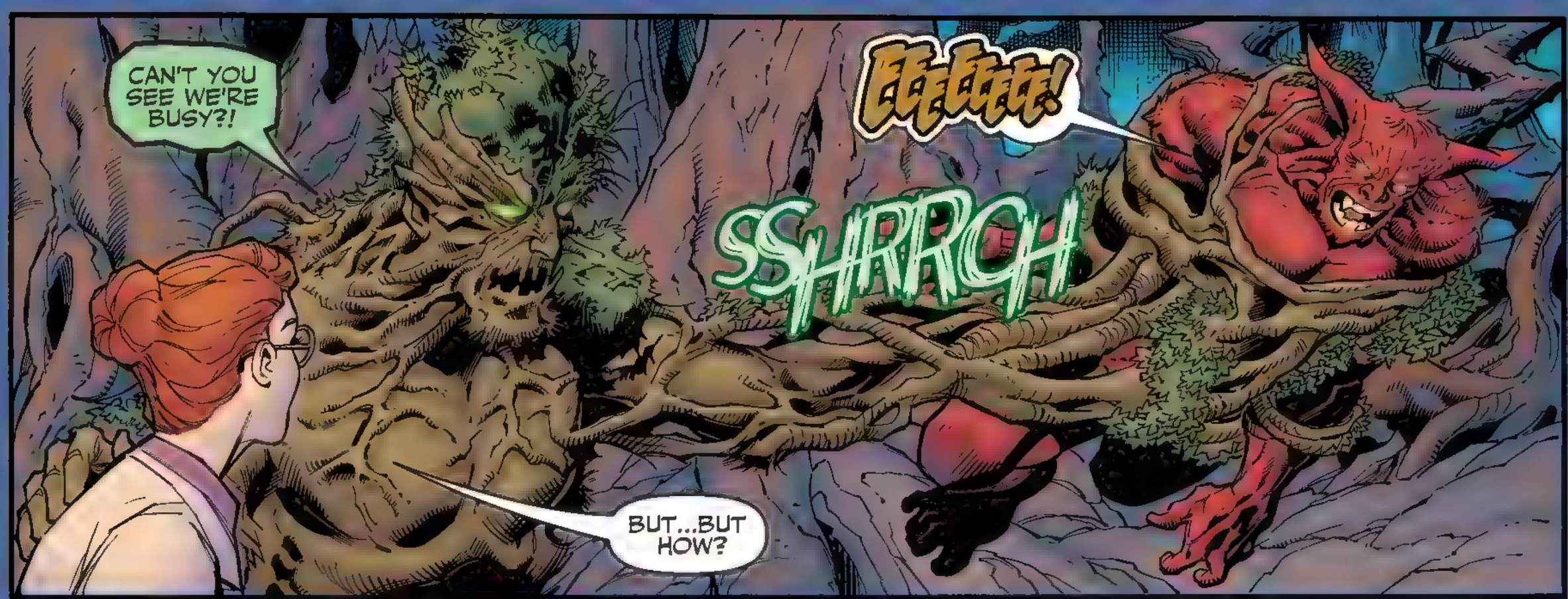

A MAN WHO HAS RECENTLY LOST THE CLOSEST THING HE HAD TO A FRIEND...
THE YOUNG WITCH NAMED BRIAR WOODRUE.

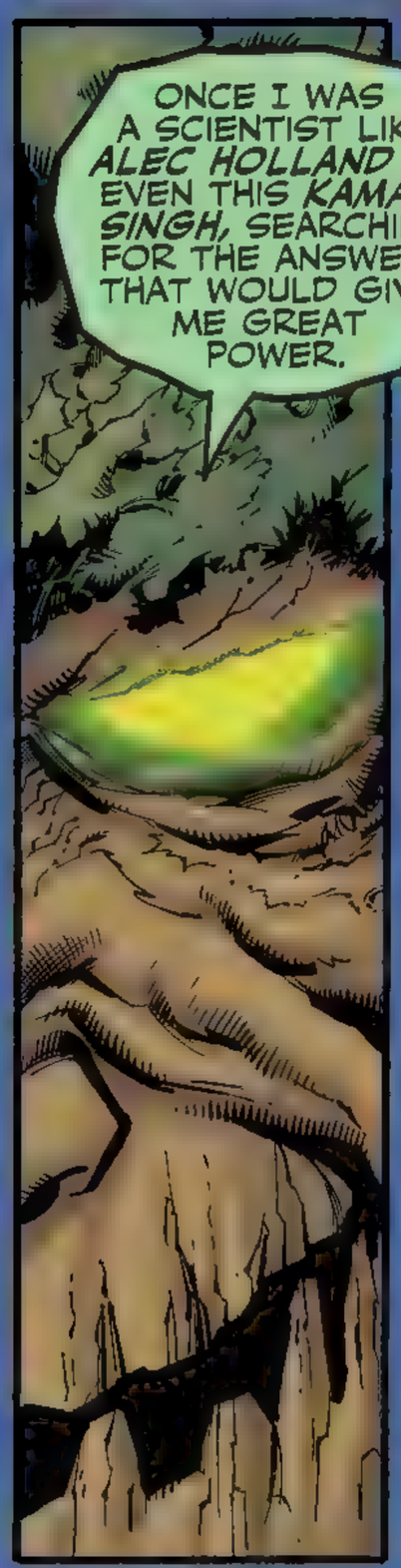

AHHH!
HUHN HUHN HUNH
WHERE-- WHERE AM I?
I SUPPOSE IT WOULDN'T BE FAMILIAR.
WHEN LAST YOU LOOKED INSIDE, THE OVERWHELMING HORROR OF WHAT YOU WITNESSED ETCHED UPON YOUR EYE AND THREATENED TO DRIVE YOU MAD...
...LEAVING YOU WITH A *FAIRY OCULUS* CAPABLE OF SEEING THINGS OTHERS CANNOT.


WHO--?
I'M THE MONSTER YOU SAW WHEN YOU PEERED THROUGH A DOORWAY IN SEARCH OF YOUR LONG-LOST FATHER...
...A DOORWAY THAT LED TO THE DEEPEST BOWELS OF HELL. BUT YOU WERE NEW THEN, UNACCUSTOMED TO HORROR. THAT IS NOT THE CASE NOW.


I'M THE GREATEST ENEMY OF THE SWAMP THING, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF. I'M *FLORONIC MAN, THE PLANT MASTER,* DRYAD EXPLORER AND RIGHTFUL HEIR TO THE POWERS OF *THE GREEN.*

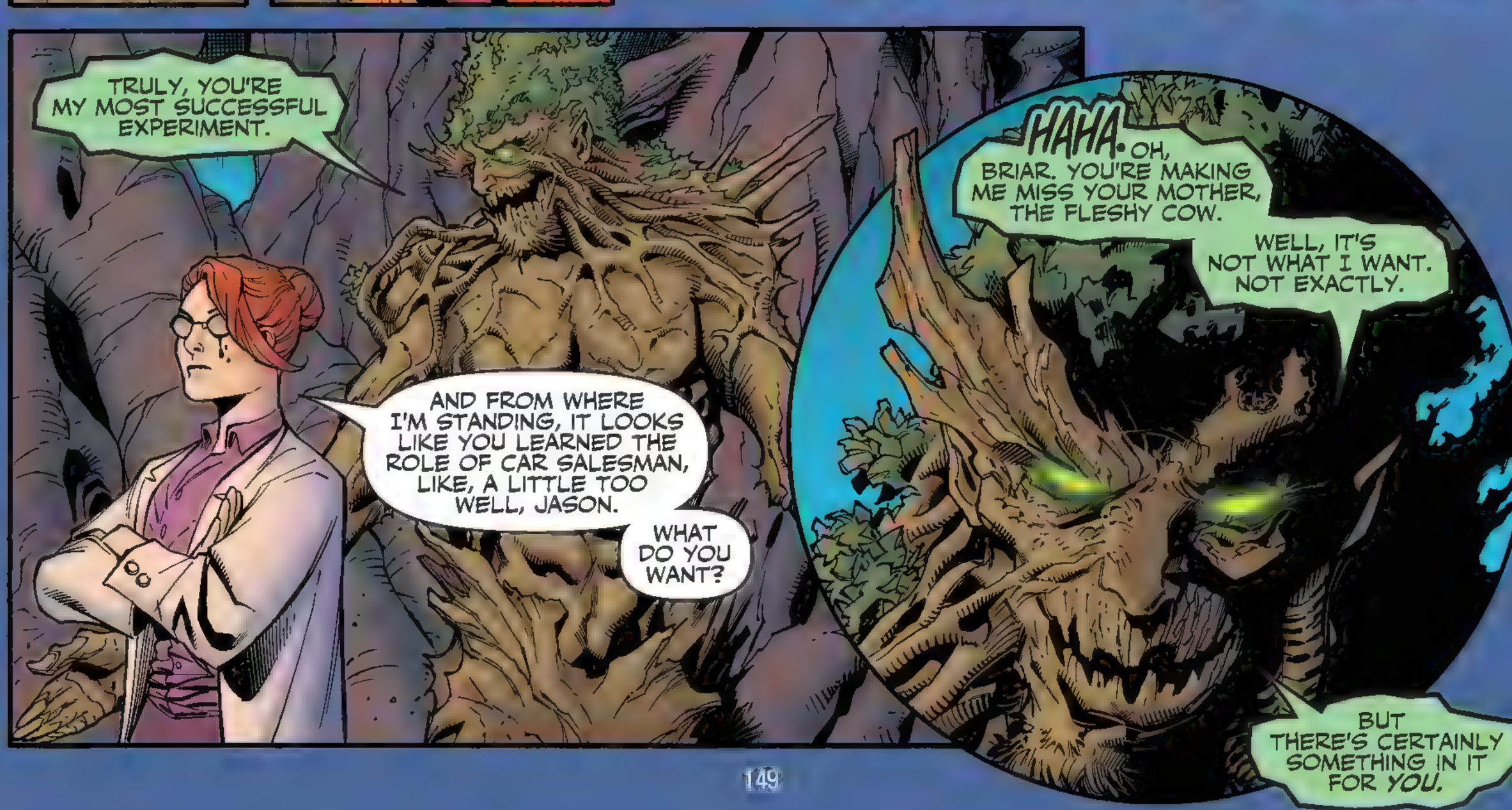
BUT YOU MAY CALL ME *DAD.*
HRRSSSH

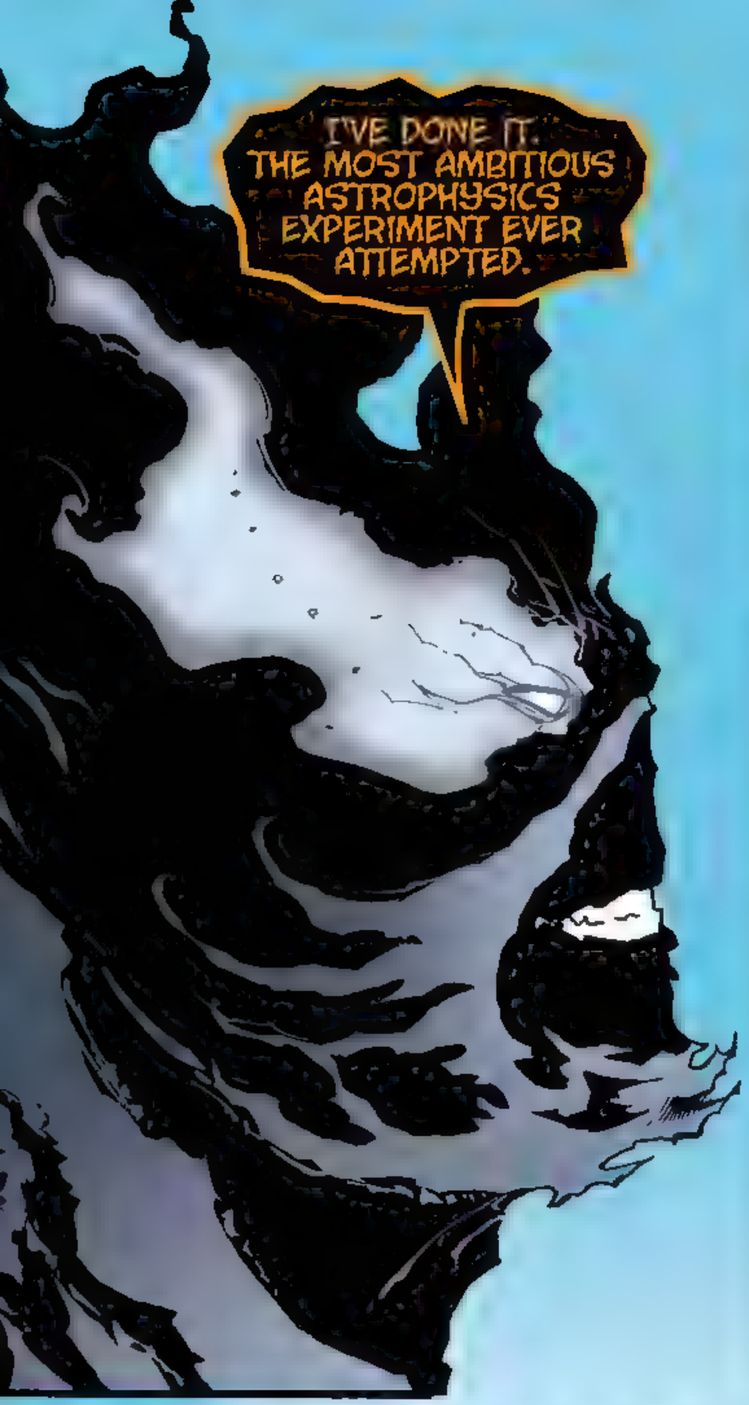

CAN'T YOU SEE WE'RE BUSY?!
EEEEEEE!
SSHRRCH
BUT...BUT HOW?


ONCE I WAS A SCIENTIST LIKE *ALEC HOLLAND* OR EVEN THIS *KAMAL SINGH,* SEARCHING FOR THE ANSWERS THAT WOULD GIVE ME GREAT POWER.

BUT AFTER SO MANY DENIALS OF MY BIRTHRIGHT, I DECIDED TO TRY A NEW TACTIC--
--I CREATED YOU. WITH YOUR MOTHER'S HELP, OF COURSE, THOUGH SHE THOUGHT I WAS JASON WOODRUE, CAR SALESMAN FROM TOLEDO.

YOU WERE TO BE MY *KEY* TO DOMINATING THE GREEN. SWAMP THING SENT ME HERE BEFORE I COULD IMPART THAT PURPOSE.
IT SEEMS, THOUGH, YOU DISCOVERED IT ON YOUR OWN. AND VIA THE RELENTLESS DRIVE YOU INHERITED, YOU'VE GAINED ACCESS TO OTHER ELEMENTAL POWERS I NEVER EVEN CONSIDERED.


TRULY, YOU'RE MY MOST SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT.
AND FROM WHERE I'M STANDING, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU LEARNED THE ROLE OF CAR SALESMAN, LIKE, A LITTLE TOO WELL, JASON.
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
HAHA. OH, BRIAR. YOU'RE MAKING ME MISS YOUR MOTHER, THE FLESHY COW.
WELL, IT'S NOT WHAT I WANT. NOT EXACTLY.
BUT THERE'S CERTAINLY SOMETHING IN IT FOR *YOU.*



THIS IS THE REALM OF ALL THINGS. THE ELEMENTAL CENTER FOR ALL EXISTENT MATTER. THE SOURCE OF ALL CREATION.

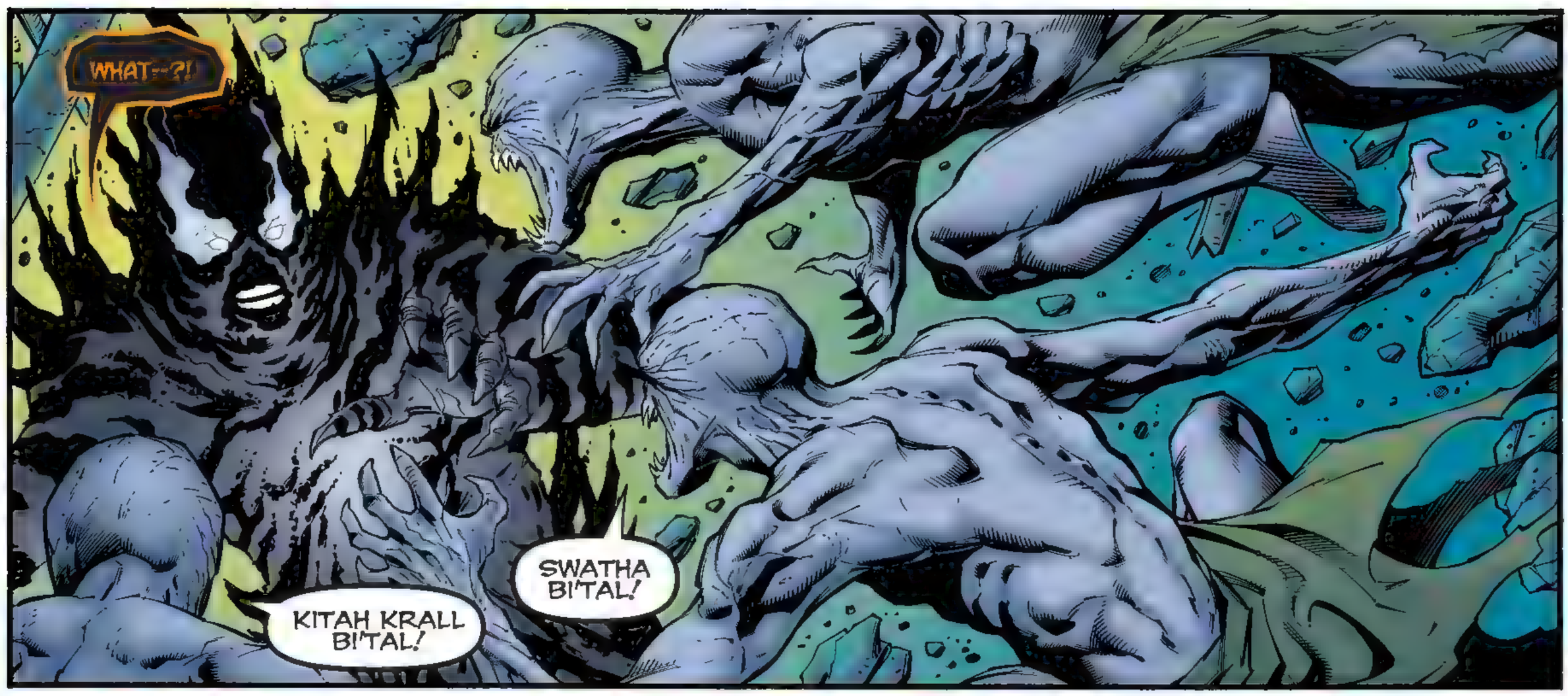
IT'S...IT'S HEAVEN.

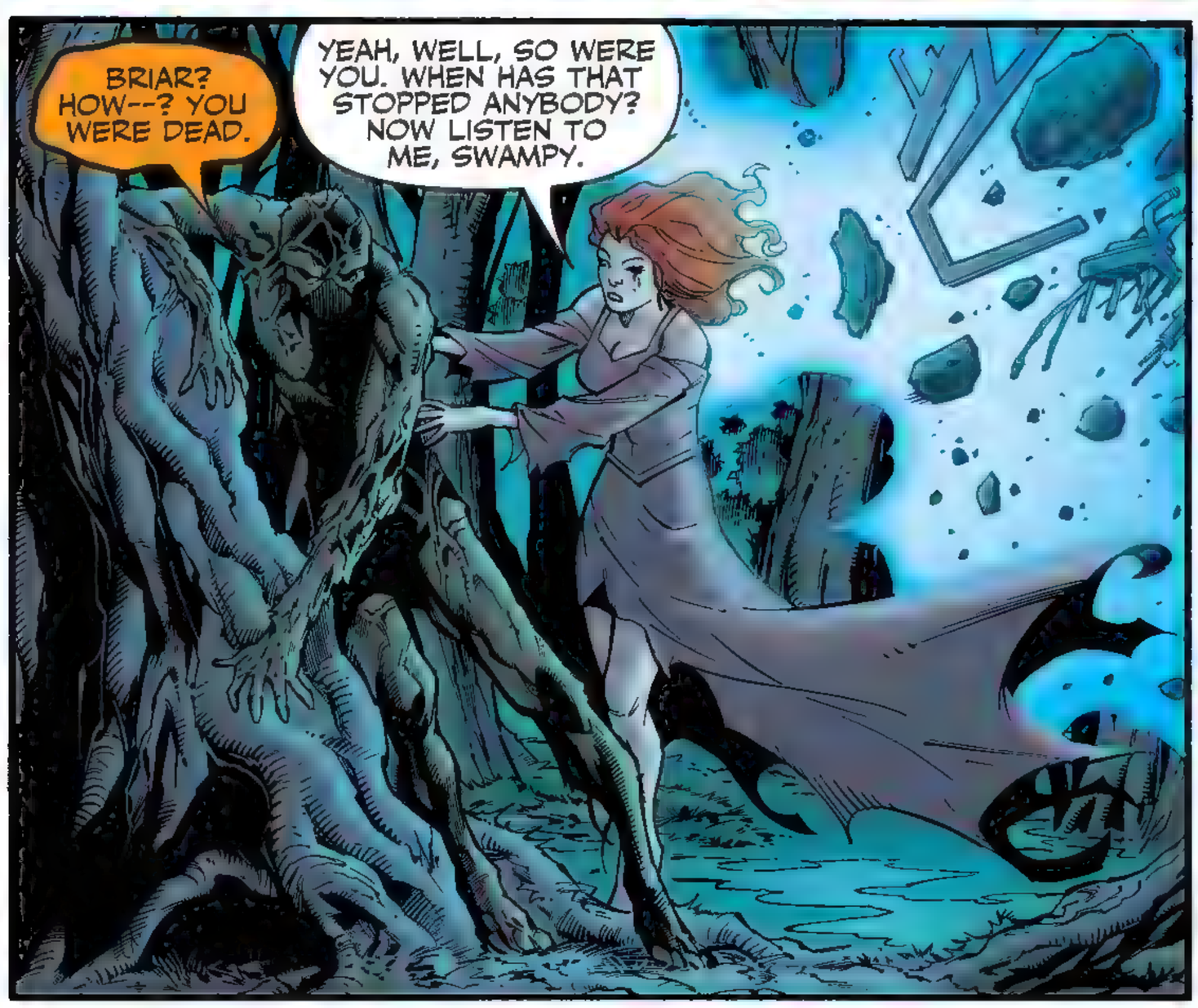
I SUPPOSE, SURE.
BUT ALL THAT CELESTIAL PRODUCTION CHOKES UP PERFECTION. IT MAKES THE UNIVERSE COMPLICATED. UNEQUAL. CRUEL.
THE DARK MATTER IS USUALLY CONTENT TO REMAIN QUIET AND UNREACTIVE, ACCEPTING THIS CRIME.
BUT NOW WE'RE ONE AND THE SAME AND THERE WILL BE CONSEQUENCES.
THRAKDOOM
"THERE WILL BE NO LIFE."
MY RED TOMORROW... DIES.
AAIIIEEEGH!
"NO DEATH."
GEORGE. WHAT'S HAPPENING--?
HEAVEN... HEAVEN'S FALLIN', MOM.
YOU CALLED A PRIORITY ALERT! WHAT'S BROKEN THIS TIME, SUPERMAN?
EVERYTHING DOWN TO THE SMALLEST PARTICLE...IS SCREAMING.
"ALL WILL BE NOTHING."

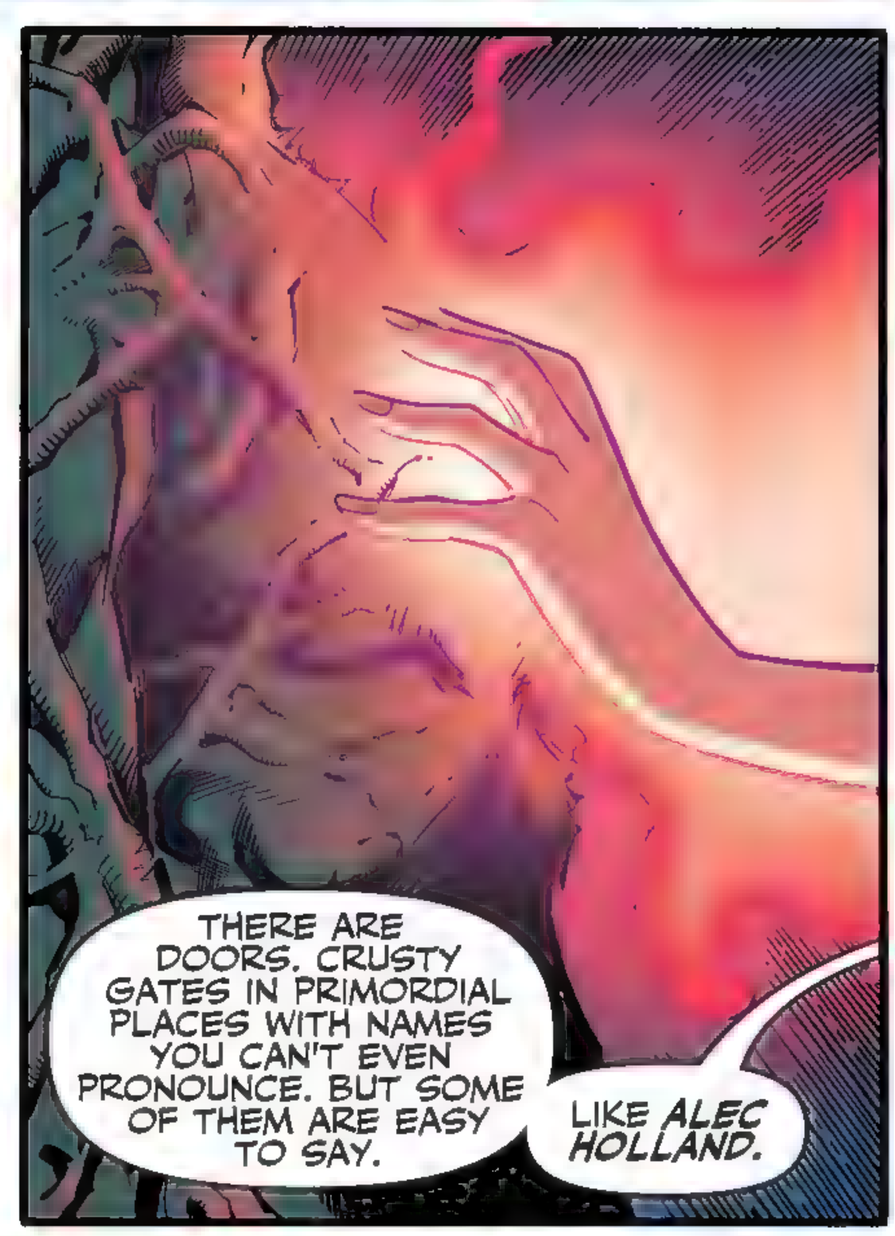
...BUT TODAY, SWAMPY...

...HELL IS ON *YOUR* SIDE.

BI'TAL. SIC 'EM.


WHAT--?!
KITAH KRALL BI'TAL!
SWATHA BI'TAL!


BRIAR? HOW--? YOU WERE DEAD.
YEAH, WELL, SO WERE YOU. WHEN HAS THAT STOPPED ANYBODY? NOW LISTEN TO ME, SWAMPY.


THERE ARE DOORS. CRUSTY GATES IN PRIMORDIAL PLACES WITH NAMES YOU CAN'T EVEN PRONOUNCE. BUT SOME OF THEM ARE EASY TO SAY.
LIKE *ALEC HOLLAND.*

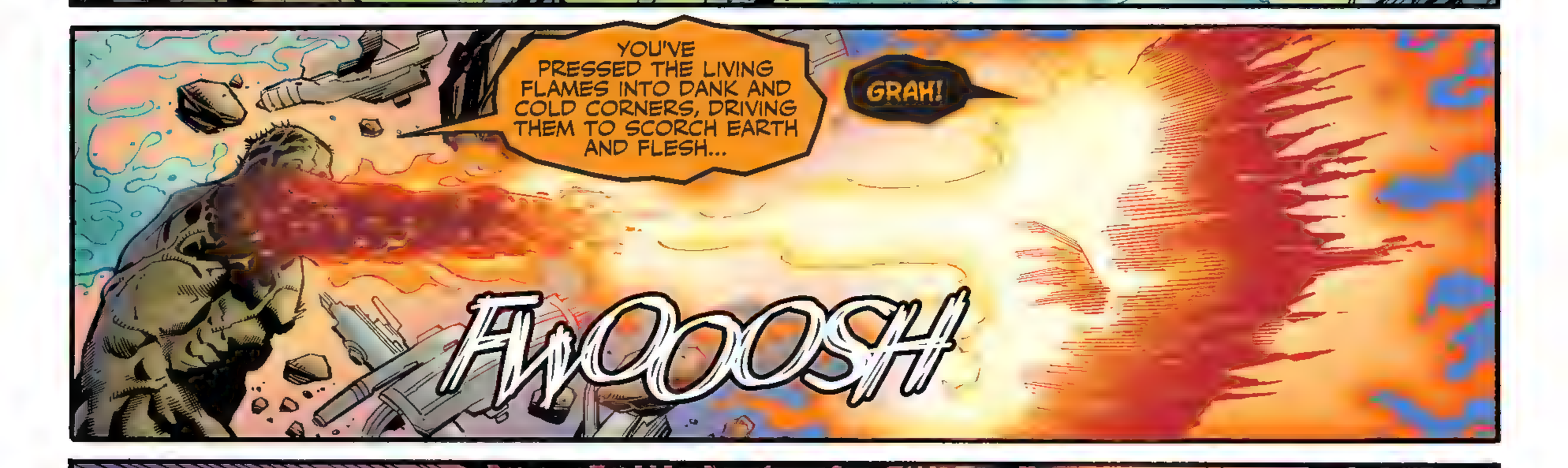
YOU WERE A DOOR, ALEC. YOU'VE LET ME USE MY POWERS TO ENTER THE GREEN REALM BEFORE. BUT NOW I HAVE A LOT MORE POWER.
AND YOU HAVE A LOT MORE DOORS.

THE ELEMENTAL REALMS ARE ASKING YOU TO BE THEIR CHAMPION. ALL OF THEM.
SO GET UP AND GET AT 'EM.

THAT?!
THAT'S WHAT YOU SEND AGAINST ME?!
SPLASH
NO. DR. SINGH...

WE'RE SENDING ME...
LORD NEVER-BARREN THE ALL-THING.
I AM A DEAD MAN IMPRINTED ON THE FORCE OF NATURE.
KATHOOM
A MEMORY OF PAIN, THIRSTING FOR REVENGE.

YOUR OFFENSES ARE MANY, DR. SINGH.
YOU'VE TORMENTED THE GREAT LEVIATHANS OF THE DEEP BLUE, KEEPING THEM FROM THEIR FREE AND EXPANSIVE FLOW...
HNGHK!


YOU'VE PRESSED THE LIVING FLAMES INTO DANK AND COLD CORNERS, DRIVING THEM TO SCORCH EARTH AND FLESH...
GRAH!
FWOOSH

AND YOU'VE SQUEEZED THE RED VEINS OF LIFE UNTIL THEY BURST.
FOR YOUR CRIMES, YOU'RE TO BE REMOVED FROM THE *DARK MATTER HOMUNCULUS* YOU ANIMATE...

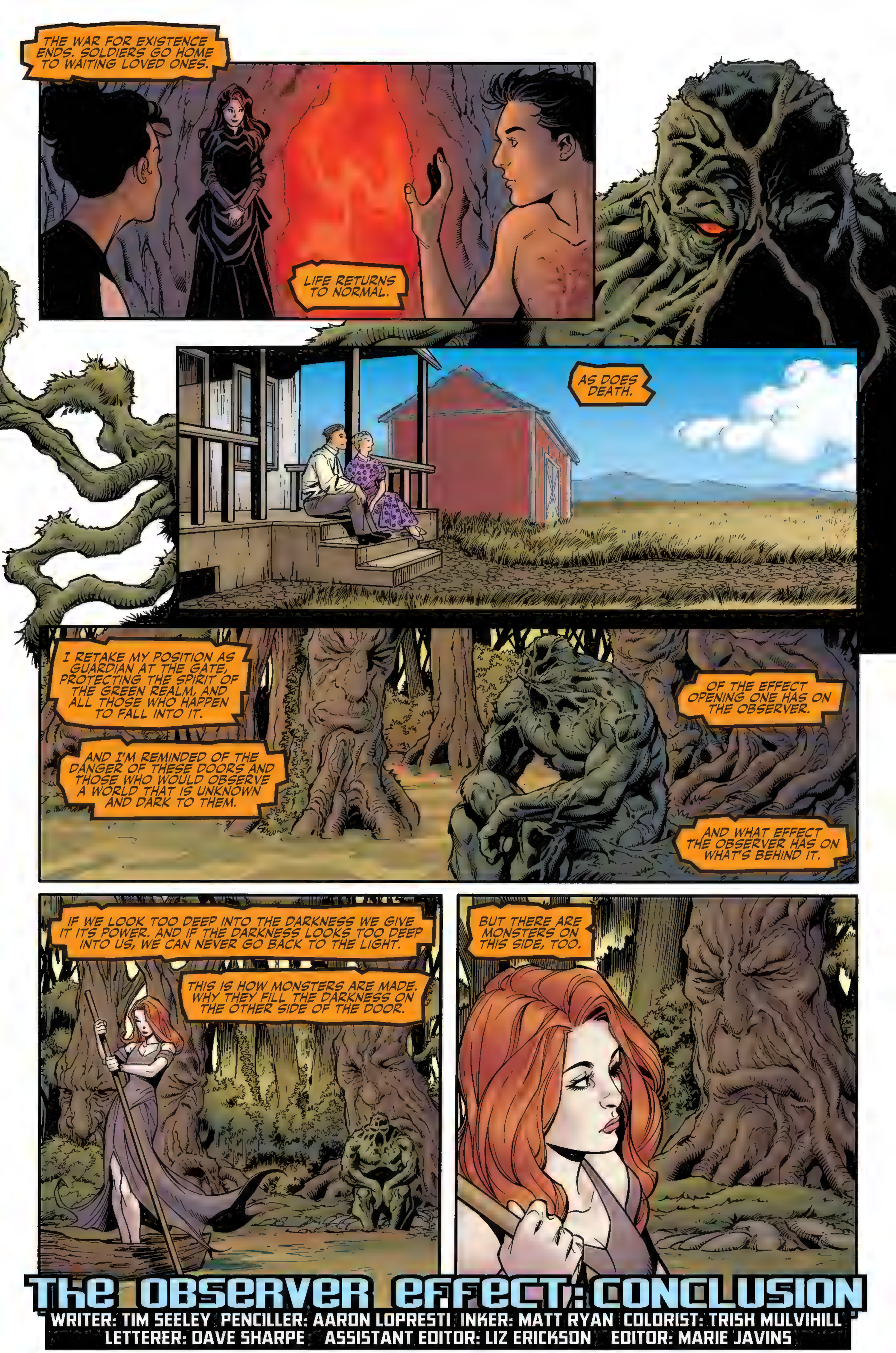
GIVEN LIFE YOU ONCE FORSOOK, SO THAT YOUR MIND AND SOUL MIGHT BECOME SOMETHING MORE THAN A MEMORY...
HGHK!
...FOR DEATH TO TAKE.

BRIAR! HURRY! YOU... ARE THE KEY!

YEP! I'VE GOT IT, SWAMPY! I'M CLOSING ALL THE DOORS!

AND *LOCKING* THEM BEHIND US.

PLPBLPPPP
MY SWAMP! I...AM BACK!
RETURN OF THE SWAMP THING...
I DUNNO, IT'S GOT A CERTAIN B-MOVIE RING TO IT.
TWIGLET?!
EW, I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU NOT TO CALL ME THAT.
HOW?
PRETTY SIMPLE WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT. IF THERE'S NO CREATION, THERE'S NOTHING TO CORRUPT. HELL WASN'T TOO BIG ON THAT.
SO THEY USED THEIR BEST ANGLE...
...ME. DAUGHTER OF A MONSTER.
NO. I NEVER JUDGED YOU BY YOUR PARENTAGE, BRIAR. DIDN'T BELIEVE IT MATTERED. WHEN YOU WITNESSED HORRORS...YOU WANTED TO HELP. YOUR FATHER...
CONVINCED HELL TO GIVE ME THE POWER TO HELP YOU SAVE THE UNIVERSE.
HE JUST WANTED WHAT HE'D LOST IN RETURN.
I'M SORRY, SWAMPY...ALEC. A DEAL'S A DEAL.
I HAVE TO CONTINUE JASON WOODRUE'S WORK.
AND YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.



The Observer Effect: Conclusion

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A TRAIL
OF MISSING CAMPERS.
A VISION
COMING TRUE.
A NEW THREAT
IS DESCENDING UPON
THE SWAMPS OF LOUISIANA...
In the Louisiana bayou, two college students have suddenly gone missing. Something very dark is at work as Swamp Thing and his supernatural companion Briar investigate the scene. Briar has a horrible vision of blood being spilled...but discovering who the murderer is will be up to Swamp Thing. Can he stop this killer before he slays even more innocent victims?
This spinetingling thriller and others are collected here in **Swamp Thing: Tales from the Bayou**. These new adventures of Swamp Thing are written by talented authors including **Tim Seeley** (*Nightwing*), **Tom King** (*Batman*), and **Brian Azzarello** (*Batman: Damned*), with stunning art by **Joëlle Jones** (*Catwoman*), **Jason Fabok** (*Detective Comics*), **Aaron Lopresti** (*Wonder Woman*), and more!
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